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[“SO YOU SEE IT WAS NOT GOOD-BYE FOR EVER,” LORD KINGFORD SAID, MALICIOUSLY.]

ROSAMOND'S HUSBAND.

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CHAPTER XXXII.

ROSAMOND soon disappeared from sight, leaving nothing but a sound of sharp clattering hoofs, which gradually died away until their faintest echo was lost; and her husband, muttering valedictions on his horse and his own bad luck, set off in another direction to look for some mode of exit.

The next morning Colonel Brand's predictions were amply fulfilled by his stepdaughter. She had taken the precaution of ordering post-horses herself, and set forth almost at dawn the following morning, *en route* to stay at Ravenslea, the old-fashioned country mansion of Sir Everard and Lady Germaine.

They were a curious old couple—rich, eccentric, and childless; friends of that most eccentric person, old Mrs. Dane, and fond of her granddaughter.

Of course they had never heard the terrible story of her “adventure,” as we may call it, with Allan Gordon. They believed her to be

an eligible, unmarried, and very hard-to-be-pleased young lady.

She was specially endeared to Sir Everard by her feats in the hunting-field, and was, as he told his wife constantly, “Old Widow Dane’s own granddaughter, a real chip of the old block.”

Laterly his own performances were restricted to riding to the cover side on a fat, elderly cob, not unlike himself, and listening to the talk of younger hunting men, and following the line by lanes, and roads, and short cuts, and not infrequently being pretty “well up” at the finish, despite his hoary head and eighty winters.

He had a very stout heart still in his venerable body, not like many younger, who cram their faces, miss their second horses purposefully, and are only to be seen going remarkably straight and well in their own glowing descriptions after dinner.

Ravenslea was a real old place. It dated from the days of Henry the Seventh, and possessed a picture gallery, a banqueting hall, various corridors, dozens of passages and three-cornered rooms, and a ghost!

Rosamond arrived early, long before luncheon time, and had plenty of leisure during the day to readjust the old lady’s knitting, and tell her little bits of news about weddings and such-like going on in the big world from which this old person had faded forty years previously, and to compare hunting notes with the old gentleman.

“My dear,” said old Lady Germaine to her young guest, as they sat confidentially over the fire after dinner, “you timed your visit well. You know you have *carte blanche* to come when you please, but this time I am more than pleased to see you. We have a big party coming to-morrow for two or three days pheasant shooting—half-a-dozen men, and some girls, and married women to help to pass the evenings. Everard is very proud of his battues, not that he ever handles a gun himself; he generally goes down with the party to the warmest corner with his old blackthorn stick. You know most of the people, I fancy. There are the Grevilles, the Fullartons, the Vanes, and Lilian and Mary Hope, besides three most eligible bachelors,

one of whom we have quite settled for you in our own minds."

"Very good of you, you kind and thoughtful hostess," said Rosamond, with a smile; "but I'm sure I've told you fifty times that I never mean to marry."

"My dear!" irritably, "that's utter nonsense, and you know it's nonsense! A girl with your fortune, your family, your appearance to settle herself down as an old maid! You make me quite angry when you talk such rubbish—you really do!"

"Well, who is this very eligible young man?" returned her companion, indifferently.

"Oh, that is my secret!" complacently. "He is everything that I could desire for you—handsome, young, rich, well-born. It will be a most desirable connection in every way, and I fully intend to make the match. You must look your very best to-morrow evening, my dear. I am a great believer in first appearances. Be sure you wear your grandmother's diamonds. They are superb. I don't say they suit every girl, such ornaments, but they become your style."

"I'll wear the diamonds, certainly, to please you; but, remember, I won't promise to fall in love with your charming young man. My heart is bullet-proof—case-hardened. If he were Adonis himself it would be all the same."

"Now, now, Rosamond, there's no use in saying all that over again. By the way, my dear, I forgot to explain to you how you came to have our room. We have gone to the other side of the house—we imagine it's warmer—and all the usual guest chambers were already told off when we got your note yesterday. We just decided to put you in there, as you are no stranger."

"It's only too big and too grand for me, Lady Germaine; that's all I see about it," replied Rosamond.

"It was not that I was thinking of, my dear. It was it's being rather lonely at the end of the east wing and shut off with those doors, but I know you are not a timid, nervous girl, like Mary or Lilian Hope. You have no mind under bed-fancies about robbery."

"Not a bit," decisively. "You're not thinking of ghosts, are you?" with a laugh.

"I warn you I don't believe in them."

"No, no, I was not thinking of them, and there's nothing for you really to be the least afraid of, in reality. Our ghost," quite gravely, "only walks in summer time, in the long twilight nights when it can be seen," nodding her bobbing curls impressively.

"How thoughtful of it—extremely kind on its part, I'm sure," decisively; "but, dearest lady, you never mean to tell me that you believe in such things—come, now, honour bright?"

"Yes, my dear, certainly I do! If I had no faith in our family apparition I would not deserve to call myself a Germanair; but, putting those sort of things aside, I have a very firm faith in warnings, dreams, broken looking-glasses, falling pictures. Am I not an ignorant, superstitious old woman, in your opinion, Rosamond?"

"I—I suppose you have some reason for your faith in these things," faltered the young lady, uncertain what to say; "and," smiling, "if you tell me a real, authenticated case, who knows but you may have the honour and glory of converting me!"

"Well, my dear, I'll tell you a dream I had myself when I was your age. I can't do more than that, can I?" preparing for a narrative by poking the fire, and settling herself very comfortably in her chair, whilst Rosamond reached down a leather-hand-screen to conceal (if need be) her incredulous smile.

"Well, my dear, as I say, when I was your age, or—maybe a little younger, I dreamt this dream, with a distinctness that after nearly half-a-century it still remains branded on my mind as though it happened last night.

"I dreamt I was in a part of the country quite strange to me, and approaching a big

country house. I entered it, and, turning to my right hand, went into a large dining-room—a long room with a big window at the end. The breakfast things were on the table, and sitting at the tea-tray with her back to the window, with the light behind her, was a lady reading a letter. She wore a white dress—in the fashion of fifty years ago, with short waist, and gigot sleeves. She was pretty, and might be from twenty-five to thirty years of age. Then I saw a man. I shut my eyes, and see his face now—coming up the garden—with a gun under his arm. He had a bad face, and there was a look of deadly intent on it; his eyes were fixed on the woman with her back to him. He stepped quietly inside the window; he meant to have shot her from behind, I could see, but she turned round quickly (some instinct, I suppose), and saw the gun levelled at her—saw the man. She made a gesture of horror—or supplication—in vain; before she had time to scream or to articulate a sound he had pulled the trigger, and shot her through the heart! He held the gun so close to her that the fire of the charge scorched her dress. She fell—without a struggle— prone on her face, down on the floor between the table and the window. He quickly composed her white gown, now all dabbled with blood—laid the gun as if it had fallen out of her hand—and ran hurriedly and stealthily down the garden, looking behind him, and from side to side as he ran; and then I awoke, trembling all over, and in a cold perspiration, my teeth shaking in my head!"

"Indeed, I don't wonder!" exclaimed Rosamond, emphatically. "But what did you have for supper?"

"Nonsense, my dear child. I dreamt this ghoulish dream three nights running, and the effects on my mind and my system was such that I had to go away for a change. Of course, I was laughed at and ridiculed by some, and by none more than my elder sister, Lady Charlotte Forbes. Time went on, years passed, say three or four, I was married, and I was on a visit to this very sister in a part of England I had never been before. My husband had not succeeded to this place and title, and Charlotte's mind was full of our settling down near her and being neighbours; so one day she and I and our two husbands started off to see a place we had heard a great deal about, some miles from her house. We drove over in an open carriage, I remember, and four horses, with two positions in yellow jackets. Well, well, that's neither here nor there, is it? No sooner had we driven a little way up the avenue, and come in sight of the house, than I knew it. It was the house of my dream. I got quite a start, and was very much agitated, and, of course, my companions were at a loss to know what ailed me. I soon told them, and how they laughed and jeered at me! I had this dream then still on the brain. I was crazy on the subject. I said nothing till we drove up, and then I said, 'Will you believe me if I go straight to the dining-room, and it is as I describe—chimney-piece to left-hand, window facing door, eight large oil-paintings hanging round?' and they all agreed. So we went in. It was the same hall exactly. I felt as if I had lived in the house, I knew it so well, and I walked to the right-hand door at once, and opened it and said to the housekeeper, 'This must be the dining-room.' I looked in—we all looked in. There was a room shaped as I said, but now furnished as a drawing-room. I felt that I looked a little foolish, but still I was not to be disheartened by Charlotte's smiles, and presently the housekeeper said,—

"It was odd your remarking, 'this must be the dining-room,' ma'am. One would think you had been here before.'

"'Yes,' I gasped, eagerly.

"'For,' she went on, 'it always was the dining-room till about four years ago, and we changed it to the drawing-room, because—'

"'Because what?'" I cried, impatiently.

"'Yes. My late mistress shot herself just

in this spot,' pointing to the very place, one morning at breakfast time?"

"'On purpose?' I asked, sinking into a chair.

"'Well, no one knows. No one saw it done. The gun was found lying by her side discharged. She was in a pool of blood stone dead.'

"'And your master; that's him,' I said, pointing to a picture over the chimney-piece, that seemed to have its eyes fixed on me in a threatening manner.

"'Yes,' I see you know him, ma'am,' she said, 'and it's very like him.'

"'Was he sorry?' I was obliged to ask.

"'Oh, bless your dear heart, yes. I never, never saw anyone take on like him. He were nearly wild with grief, at leastways at first. He could not bear to go near the body, nor to look at it at any price, nor even to stay a night in the house. He went off, and within four months he married a young lady that used to be staying here at times. A very pretty lady she were, too, and they never came here since. He can't bear the place—he lets it; but anyway, let or empty, it's no matter, he's a rich man, for the mistress had made a will shortly before her death, and left him all her money, and this place it was hers.'

"'And the housekeeper went on to say that the lady's relatives came and made many inquiries, and said some terrible things about the widower, and were full of suspicions, but nothing was proved—neither accident, suicide, or murder.'

"I was the only one who knew the truth, and I declare my knees trembled under me to such an extent, only they had put me into a chair and got me a glass of water I would have fallen. The housekeeper thought I was just upset at the story, nothing else, but Charlotte and the others knew better. I came to presently, and thought I would never get myself quick enough out of the accused house. I need not tell you that we did not take it. And now, my dear girl, that is a true story. What do you think of my dream?"

"I think it was the strangest one I ever heard of. Of course you did not bring him to justice, did you?"

"I? No; how could I?"

"I suppose not, well, and yet you saw him murder his wife as plainly as you see me!" shuddering.

"Yes, just as plainly as I see you," emphatically.

"It looks as if you were just brought in your sleep as a witness, does it not?"

"Yes, it does, and shall I tell you the sequel?"

"A sequel! I did not know there was one! Of course."

"Two or three years after I was in Italy for my health, and I saw him at a masked ball at the carnival. The women were all masked—the men were not. He looked gloomy, morose, fierce, and miserable, as if some hideous shadow was over his life. His wife, the woman for whom he had done it, was there, flirting and making herself very conspicuous, even for a masked ball. He did not seem to care. Something made me, despite of my will, despite of an agonising struggle against it, speak to him."

"You did!" exclaimed Rosamond, in a low whisper. "You, Lady Germaine!"

"Aye, you'd hardly believe it now, would you, of a fat, common-place looking old woman like me? I did. I found myself standing beside him in the crowd looking at the dances, and I said, warning him, 'You remember the morning of the nineteenth of June, eight years ago?' He turned the colour of ashes."

"What—what," he muttered, "do you mean—who are you? You yellow mask, speak!"

"I was there," I said, "I saw you do it! I saw you shoot her, with these eyes, looking hard at him through the mask."

"Then, if you did, for mercy sake give me up and let me suffer; the life I am living is one of torture, he hissed into my ear. 'You are

a spirit,' he said; 'no human eye saw me do it!'

'I am not a spirit,' I returned, 'but I saw you. I do not mean to give you up to the hangman. Your own conscience will avenge her better than the law,' and then I turned and vanished in the crowd. I never saw him again—never heard of him, but an Englishman's body was found in the Tiber not long after, and I always had an instinctive feeling that it was he. Mind you, I never asked. I am not sure, and, for all I know, he may be living yet, carrying his secret to the grave. And now, my dear child, there is the first going. I hope I've not frightened you too much, and given you the blues. Run away now, and get yourself ready for dinner.'

CHAPTER XXXIII.

As Rosamond dressed herself for dinner the day following her long *ette-d'ete* with Lady Germaine, she could not help thinking that her great bedroom, with its massive four poster and funereal plumes, and velvet curtains, was rather an awe-inspiring looking couch, and the big massive wardrobes looked full of grim capabilities, and able to harbour a legion of ghosts.

She had a big dressing-room as well, in which she was adorning herself at the present moment; casting, occasionally, searching glances into the glowing apartment beyond, although it was lit up by a roaring log fire. She, however, soon was totally wrapped up in her toilette and the contemplation of her own charms in the large looking-glass, which had a pair of great silver branch candlesticks at either side.

She admired her own reflection not a little—a square-cut black satin and tulle dress, a diamond collar and half-a-dozen diamond stars, dotted round the open body of her dress. The effect, she told herself, was excellent; and, with a certain sense of complacency, she nodded an adieu to her smiling double in the mirror, and taking her gloves and fan, and leaving her maid to "tidy up," went slowly downstairs.

Most of the guests had arrived in time for afternoon tea—most, but not all. They were now assembled, black-coated, or in gorgeous gowns round the two drawing-room fire-places, awaiting the ever welcome sound of the gong.

Rosamond saw a guest there she did not expect; in short, Lord Kingsford was Lady Germaine's eligible young man; and with a sly but significant glance she led him up to Rosamond, saying—

"Lord Kingsford, let me present you to a very dear young friend of mine, Miss Dane."

"Miss Dane and I have met before," he rejoiced, bowing, as Rosamond made no effort to extend her hand.

"You will take her down to dinner, then," said Lady Germaine, beaming on the pair a motherly and benignant smile, as she moved away to arrange the coupling of her other guests, little knowing, in the innocence of her heart, that it was to avoid this very gentleman Miss Dane had sought her roof, and that she was affording Lord Kingsford a priceless opportunity—an opportunity he did not mean to let slip this time.

"So you see it was not good-bye for ever," he said, rather maliciously, as they walked together to the big oak-panelled dining-room, Miss Dane resting her fingers in the most gingerly manner on his coat-sleeve.

"No," very rudely, "it was too good to be true."

"Oh, I say, come, Miss Dane, you must not be so rough on me as all that."

"Don't talk of personalities!" she exclaimed, as she seated herself. "Talk of the weather, as we can't sit dumb. I suppose it would be too remarkable."

"The weather will soon be exhausted—it's not a topic I am great on at any time. May I not say a word of Allan Gordon?" in a low voice.

"Your question is an insult," colouring even to her neck. "If you mention the subject I shall rise and leave the table," and she looked quite prepared to do so.

Thus silenced, her companion fell into everyday topics as well as he could, and talked (and he could talk well) in a way that slightly took the edge off her anger; but he found it very hard to keep his head steady and cool, and even to make a pretence of eating his dinner, when he realised, as he did at every moment, that this lovely, disdainful-looking girl sitting beside him, repudiating his attentions, scorning his confidences averse her recreant lover, was his wife, his beloved Rosamond, his mistaken, ignorant, but wholly blameless partner.

He glanced at her surreptitiously several times, and thought, "supposing I tell her now. Of course she would faint—it would be as though a bomb had exploded on the table before her. I'll make her give me a meeting to-morrow morning, and we will clear it up then and there once for all." No sooner thought than done.

Dessert was now being handed round. He had no time to lose, so he spoke at once,—

"Miss Dane, you avoid me, and I can understand why," in a low tone. "You are under a mistake. I mean everything for your good, for your happiness, if you will listen to me. I believe (if you are what you used to be) you will be the happiest girl in England to-morrow, that is, if you will listen to me?" anxiously.

"I will not listen to you," doggedly.

"Rosamond!" in an imploring tone, necessarily low, "you are wrong, very wrong, only shortening the happy hours that are in store for you. If you like Lady Germaine shall be present, but speak to you I must. It is next door to a matter of life and death."

"Is it about him?" she asked, with pale lips.

"It is," he returned, in a low voice.

"Is he alive?"

"Yes, he has never forgotten you. He—he is—longing to see you" (may you be forgiven for that untruth, Allan Kingsford). A feeling that the ladies were about to rise impelled him to add hastily, "Rosamond, for heaven's sake! don't refuse me. Meet me in the garden on the long walk to-morrow, after breakfast, will you? Say yes, I beseech you!"

"And Rosamond said, as she rose,—

"Yes."

"Very well, then, this time to-morrow," picking up her fan, and putting it into her hand with a gesture of extreme significance. "This time to-morrow you will know all," and then the ladies fled away, a goodly number, for it was a large dinner party, and there were a legion of heavy dowagers and sprightly young married ladies that Lady Germaine had told Rosamond she had long been wanting "to kill off," not, be it understood, in a murderous manner, but to entertain them to a *recherche* meal that she considered she owed them and their lords.

"This time to-morrow I shall know all," said Rosamond, to herself. "All what? He is going to tell me something about Allan Gordon. I know it; I saw it in his face, but what can he tell me that I do not know myself?—that he deserted me and left me to my fate six long years ago!"

CHAPTER XXXIV.

ROSAMOND was so unnerved, thinking of her coming interview, and wondering incredulously at what happiness would be in store for her, in rebuking herself for promising to meet Lord Kingsford, and then in falling back on a sense of aching curiosity, that for an hour she sat at her fire before going to bed, staring into the coals, thinking and speculating.

At last the sound of a clock striking one—with a startling boom—hurried her into the vast expanse of cold linen sheets. For a good while she lay watching the fire, gradually getting lower and lower, gradually the big red chasms fell in, and gradually she fell asleep.

It seemed to her that she had been a long time in the arms of Morpheus (which was a mistake). She had not been asleep more than an hour, when she was suddenly awake—not by degrees, but most thoroughly and completely—by a sound in the dressing-room.

Her heart beat very fast indeed—almost as if it were going to jump out of her bosom—when she saw a bright light in the adjoining dressing-room door, which was very slightly ajar, and there was a sound of whispering voices, and of stealthy, as though stocking, feet.

What could it mean? Who was it? There were more than one. It was not a dream like Lady Germaine's. No; she was awake. She pinched herself severely in the arm to test the fact. It was not the family apparition! She would soon know. They were coming into the room!

Whoever they were she felt her blood turn to ice in her veins as she saw three men enter the door, with a bull's-eye lantern in the hand of the first, a low set, hideous ruffian.

In one second she closed her eyes and feigned sleep—it was her only chance, and fortunately the bed, thanks to its many velvet hangings, was still in shadow.

They advanced softly.

"She's asleep, I suppose," muttered robber No. Two, in a husky whisper, jerking his head towards the bed.

"Aye, if she ain't she ought to be," replied No. One, in a savage undertone. "I'll just seal!"

In another moment Rosamond was sensible of a sound of stealthy feet approaching—of a fall, searching light held over her, and of a breath reeking of onions and brandy.

The light was held steadily before her eyes in a manner that showed every eyelash, every vein in her temples in a manner that would have disclosed at once a quivering lip, or a bead of perspiration wrung from her forehead in her agony of the ordeal.

The time was, perhaps, was one minute—sixty seconds. It seemed to Rosamond an hour. She felt she could not hold out five seconds longer, the tension was too severe. If he did not go in another instant she must open her eyes and scream!

"Aye, she's asleep," he said, at last, and put an end to her agony by turning away the light. "She's a mighty pretty girl, too. Just like a picture, and sleeping like a baby. It's as well she is, for if she had opened her peepers or caterwauled I'd a soon slit her pretty throat with this."

Rosamond opened cautiously half an eye, and saw that in his other hand he carried a long butcher's knife.

He went on once more,—

"This was the best room—for the business, as I told you. It's cut off from the wing by that door, and if Ben brings the ladder to the dressing-room window we will lower away the swag. See now," said this man in authority, "you and Ben go and fix the ladder where I showed you, and Tom and me will take our pick of the plate closet. Bring all up here, and lower away from that ere dressing room winder, and for fear that pretty little sleeping beauty should waken I'll just lock the door. It's very thoughtful of folks leaving keys in the locks like this!" taking it out as he spoke; "and after a big feed like the one-to-night the servants is sure to be tired, and have left half the plate out of its green baize bags or knocking about in the butler's pantry. Come on now, you Ben! fix the ladder. You are small, and I showed you the place to squeeze through, and we will do the more risky part of the business. Them diamonds o' hern were a find. My eye! but they are real blazers! Now, you must go like mice, for old folks is light sleepers."

So saying he motioned his confederates through the door and went out, and locked it noiselessly behind him.

(To be continued.)

HOUSEWIFE AND WIFE.

ONE summer I spent a few weeks with my husband's friends, in the little village of Campbellton, Ayrshire. Some of the people were seamen, but the majority were shepherds and farmers. Among the latter class I was particularly attracted by a family of the name of Semple, for they seemed to embody all the typical virtues of their race—a piety that was stern but genuine, a morality which admitted of no peradventures, strict economy and thrift, combined with untiring industry and scrupulous cleanliness. They were "well-to-do," owned a prosperous farm, and had "siller in the bank."

But far above any of their possessions they prized their beautiful daughter, Euphemia; a girl about whose bringing up the village were unanimous in praise.

One Saturday night a young man called David Brodie came down from Glasgow to stay over the Sabbath with us. Getting towards milking time, he walked with me to Semple's farm to get the glass of new milk and bit of toasted oatcake, which was my favourite supper. On our way up, as we slowly picked our steps among the loose stones and heather stems, I told David about this little paragon of worth and beauty. I had no idea that he would fall in love with her, but he did; and yet, in every particular, they were the antipodes of each other, even personally, for Euphemia had the brilliant fairness of a Scotch lowland lassie, and David was as dark as Donald Dhu himself.

I soon noticed that he visited Campbellton every week; then that Euphemia and he came to kirk together, and read out of the same Bible. Then, of course, I and all the village knew that their marriage was agreed upon. My husband was very much pleased at it. Men never look further than the leading facts of a matrimonial engagement. Euphemia was good and beautiful. She would have a fair dower on her wedding-day, and was the undoubted heiress of the breezy little farm, with its fine cattle and famous cheese dairy. She was a splendid housewife, and would keep both David's and her own gear well together.

David had rented a pretty flat, and furnished it in a very handsome style for a couple whose income would not be much above £300 per annum. Then he married Euphemia, and brought her to Glasgow. In a week or two I went to see her, and found that she had transferred all her methodical ways and old-fashioned proprieties to her city home. Many of them, harmless enough and possible enough in a roomy farm-house, were here impossible, except with a waste of personal exertion that was exhausting and unreasonable.

She could get no servant to remain with her. For instance, her ideas about washing, though quite practicable among the Ayrshire hills, were simple impossibilities in a smoky city. But Euphemia was not of that class of souls that believe "circumstances alter cases." It was proper that fine linen which she herself had spun should be washed white as snow; and if it was proper, it ought to be done under all circumstances. This was but an example of a disposition which, having set before itself one idea of right, conscientiously follows out that idea through thick and thin.

A crease in a carpet, a finger-mark on the highly polished furniture, was a great trial to her, and every additional dish was calculated to the last bawbee.

David soon began to feel that entertaining a friend in his own house was a formidable affair. So, after enduring either in silence or on protest this over-carefulness of what he had bought to be used and enjoyed, he left Euphemia to her will regarding it, and took his friends to the Commercial Hotel or the Beef-steak Club, and how they had things there, and what the expense was, Euphemia could only guess.

But she did not complain much; that was not her way. She only looked the disapprobation she felt, went about with a dumb protest in her eyes and a severe sorrow in all her ways. A person must live in this atmosphere to know just how irritating it is.

David at first asked her, "What was the matter?" "Was she ill?" "Was she angry?" What had he done?"

Well, he did many things that hurt Euphemia. He came into the house with dirty boots, and though he changed them in the kitchen, the spotless floor witnessed against him. He was not careful of his clothes, and would buy new suits as the style changed, though she carefully mended and cleaned, and laid away the old ones until his drawers were full of them. At first he had done the same for Euphemia, and the summer silks and winter merinos laid away in lavender and camphor bore witness to his extravagance.

The birth of a son in the third year of their marriage for a time drew them closer together; but as the boy grew he was only a fresh source of trouble.

Euphemia's idea of a father was of the old Roman type—a being always holding a rod and well inclined to use it at the slightest dereliction from duty.

David was sorry for the little fellow under such strict discipline, and took him often on sly pleasure-makings, where he treated him to shows, sweets, and his own way, *ad libitum*. Of course Euphemia disapproved, and of course the child was growing up to regard his mother as a being bent only on his misery and his father as a beautiful, generous friend, always willing, but not always able to help him.

David about this time received an appointment to go to Calcutta, and she refused to accompany him.

The husband and wife parted on Greenock quay very quietly, and Euphemia and her son went back to the little Ayrshire farm.

It is always a great experiment for a married woman to return to her father's house, and she soon found that she had made a mistake. Little as she had conformed to city life in her eight years' residence in Glasgow, she had still altered enough to set her very far away from her old life.

Her mother was dead; her father—a silent, stern man, who unbent only to his little grandson, seemed likely to spoil him even worse than his father had done. Most of her old friends were married, and had changed so much under their husband's influence that she did not get along with them as before.

Towards the end of the summer Mrs. Floyd, a wealthy English lady, sought a few weeks' board with her, in hopes that the clear, bracing air would benefit her sick child. They soon became friends, for Euphemia felt now the need of someone to give her help and counsel. She had taken a strange resolution. She wanted to go somewhere where she could learn to dress and talk and entertain—she wanted to astonish David when he came home, and win back the love she had so perversely worn out.

Mrs. Floyd entered warmly into her scheme, and when she returned to England, Euphemia and her son went with her. For it had been fairly represented to her how travel and experience would open her husband's eyes, and that something more than fine dress would be necessary to re-capture her lost love. However, Euphemia had rare personal loveliness, very good natural abilities, and no small share of tact, if she would consent to use it.

At first she felt awkward in her unusual dress, and timid among strange and highly cultivated people; but these faults soon wore away, and before the end of the second winter there was no more elegant and intelligent woman in Mrs. Floyd's parlours than Mrs. David Brodie.

Now she began to look eagerly for her husband's return, to lay plans for his happiness,

and to dream and think of him night and day.

At long stated intervals, she received remittances of money and a few friendly sentences; but, oh, how cold these sentences now seemed! She longed to write and tell him so, but her natural prudence always dashed the nobler impulse.

At length the weary three years were over; he was coming home. She hurried back to Glasgow, and this time it was her hands and purse and loving forethought that prepared their second home. She suffered it to lack no ornament or element she thought David would enjoy; and during her two years' sojourn with Mrs. Floyd her taste had been well cultivated.

When all was ready she left her address with David's employers, and sat down to wait. She knew he would come for wee David's sake; she meant that he should stay for her sake.

And she was not disappointed. David, too, had learnt some lessons. He had seen women in those East Indian climates, without much of any charm but personal beauty; and he had learnt, amid license of all kinds, to believe that a good woman, with a cultivated conscience, is a far nobler creature than one of mere impulse and feeling.

He would have been willing to have given the old Euphemia back his loving allegiance, how much rather this noble woman, who had added to her sterling worth the graces of affection and the fascinations of a cultivated intellect and a becoming toilet.

So the second marriage was better than the first, for Euphemia had learnt that it is not enough to be a good housewife without being also a loving, affectionate wife; nor enough to be good without being also tolerant and gracious.

A. E. B.

HONESTY AMONG WOMEN.—The *Albany Journal* says:—"Although hundreds of women hold positions of financial trust in the country, we have yet to hear of one of them being guilty of embezzlement or defalcation. The evidence clearly sustains the position of those who believe that women are qualified—morally, physically and intellectually—for the handling of money in stores or in banks. General Spinner, who first introduced women into the United States Treasury, left on record a striking testimonial to the efficiency and integrity of the sex, and no one ever had a better opportunity to study the question than he, who at one time had 1,000 women under his direction, engaged chiefly in handling money. He testifies that they count more accurately and rapidly than men; that their ability to detect counterfeits proved to be superior in almost every test; that they were, without an exception, honest, and were invariably more careful and painstaking in their work. Complaints of inaccuracy and carelessness on the part of men were made frequently during General Spinner's administration of the United States Treasury, but such complaints against lady clerks were few. The shrewdest and quickest detectors of counterfeit currency were women, and in case of dispute as to the genuineness of money, General Spinner invariably took the judgment of a Miss Grandin, who was for a long time employed in his bureau. In speaking of her ability in this particular one day, General Spinner said, 'If I were a believer in clairvoyance I should say that she possessed that power; but I am not, so I call it instinct.' Although there are several thousand women employed by the Government as clerks, accountants, postmistresses, and in other capacities, not one has ever proved unfaithful to her trust. Many have been discharged for incapacity and for other reasons, but never for dishonesty. These points are worth the consideration of merchants and bankers, particularly now when there seems to be an epidemic of embezzlements.

A LOVER AND HIS LASS.

CHAPTER II.

THE GREY LADY.

WITHOUT further preamble I must tell you at once that the grey lady is my aunt Rachel, privately thus christened by her dutiful niece Celia, namely, myself.

Having an eye to colour of some kind, be it ever so subdued, Aunt's uniform greyness is to me monotonous. There is a coldness of hue about it which chills one. Being brought much into contact with her gives one that peculiar small shiver which is known as "someone walking over one's grave."

Hair gray, not white or silvery with age, for aunt Rachel is not old—fifty or thereabouts, I should think—though the exact number of years is carefully concealed, eyes grey, a cold steel grey, which would never warm the "frozen channels of one's heart." Then she persistently dresses in grey; for what reason I could never discover, unless she desired to be a monochrome. Grey prints in the morning, grey merino in the afternoon, and grey silk on Sundays and high days and holidays. The colour may, perhaps, vary in tint, but it is always grey.

There is, too, a soft feline air and manner about her which I long since mentally likened to one of those fluffy-haired chinchilla cats, which are so rare and delicate, and so tigerish in temper. If I was a true believer in the metempsychosis or transmigration of animals, I should assert that, once in the vista of long-past years, Aunt Rachel had been one of these grey-furred grimalkins in a better world, perhaps, and though a grade higher in the scale of humanity, still with the lingering traits of the dead animal. She has, moreover, a knack of purring softly instead of talking—a silly intoning which to me is simply irritating. I always notice that when Aunt purrs most she is mentally hatching something disagreeable.

I often wonder whether I really am "precious Celia," "my sweet kitten," "sweetest love," etc., which she is pleased to call me, or whether that is catlike of sentiment. Instinct tells me Aunt does not quite adore me as she professes to do, and I know very well that I do not adore her. The harmony is, therefore, perfectly reciprocal. For many years past she has filled the place of mother to me; that is, as far as looking after my wardrobe until I grew up went, and trying her hardest in her silky way to wean me from Prue's tender care and idolatry. This, however, she has found useless to try any longer. I love Prue, and Prue loves me. After father, I believe comes first. Mother I have not. She lies in Marling churchyard under the cypresses, and Aunt Rachel, alias the grey lady, reigns at Gable End in her stead.

When yet but a child I used to fancy how charming it would be if something or somebody took Aunt away, and left father, Prudence and I together. In a vague indefinite way the idea was blissful; the realization, however, has not yet come to pass, and my ripened judgment tells me that in all human probability only one thing will ever make Aunt leave Gable End if she can help it, and that is death.

To this plain unvarnished idea have I come at last. Until grim death comes a' knocking at the door, aunt is "planted," and it troubles me now no more. What she wills, must be—a soft, purring, veiled *meow* if you like. To rule is her heaven, not with an iron rod, but dove's wing steel-tipped. Aunt without Gable End, father, Michael and I to rule, would be like a ship rudderless, and without a compass.

Gable End, house and lands, have belonged to the Lascelles for generations, without a single outsider of name or race to intermingle—a line of country esquires, who superintended the tilling of their fields, the gathering in of their harvests, and the rearing of their own

flocks and herds. While my grandfather Lascelles still lived, my father fell in love with and married Lady Celia Marchmont, then on a visit to Sir George and Lady Vacher, our nearest neighbours, at Marling Hall. It was purely a love-match, though my mother was a beauty and an heiress, and her people wished her to marry money too, but she preferred father and Gable End.

Father says to this day, though I don't believe he really means it, that mother loved Gable End the better of the two. When he says this I kiss him, and say, "you dear old darling, mother couldn't do that."

For the first few years of their wedded life they travelled abroad, principally in Italy, and there it was that the passion for art and all artistic things ripened in father's breast, fed and nourished on what it saw around. Then grandfather died, and they came home to Gable End, where three years after I was born, and my mother died.

Father did not rave or weep, fondly as he loved her, but he shut himself in the long low-ceilinged panelled room, which held all his art-treasures gathered abroad in their wanderings, and refused to be comforted. Then it was that, after a lapse of eighteen months, Aunt Rachel, widow of father's only and younger brother Gordon, in the Indian Staff Corps, who had died in India of fever a few years before, leaving a widow and one son behind him, not too well provided for, came. Aunt I believe, so Prue tells me, came down bodily, and took possession as it were of us, father recognising her intention of being useful by placidly giving way to her purring, indomitable will; and I at that period having no voice to spare, only clung to Prue, and set up a beautiful squall when she wanted to take me from her.

Michael, a biggish boy at this time, used to come to Gable End for his holidays, and regarded it at length as his home.

As years went on Aunt consulted father as to what Michael should be. Father said whatever he liked; at any rate, through what cogening I know not, Michael was installed at Gable End as manager of the farm lands.

I think father was glad to have the responsibility and trouble of what he cared little about shifted from his shoulders, giving him more time to read his "Divine Commedia," study his bronzes and cameos, and compile his treatise on intaglios.

I have left Michael's description to the last. It is, however, not necessarily least.

Is he handsome? Perhaps—they say so, his mother loudest of all. Hair black as ebony, with his mother's steel grey eyes, swarthy skin, and clean shaven face. A soft manner when he chooses, also like his mother's, only without purr, and a harsh voice, modulate it as he will—not a Lascelles in any way, except the ebony hair.

Father is fair, but Uncle Gordon and several of the former Lascelles were very dark.

To add the final item to his inventory, Michael is my slave!

Why is it that one never does appreciate or care for what one can stretch out the hand and grasp without any extraneous trouble? Oh! for the waywardness of human nature. It is a horrible, but ever present trait.

If Michael were not my slave—if he never conceded to my smallest whims and fancies—if sometimes he said me nay, when it is always an eternal yea, I verily believe I should like him better. That is, of course, I like him well enough, but that is all. Aunt too, is everlastingly throwing him at me, metaphorically speaking, and that is what irritates me. I don't want a man thrown at me like a ball I am expected to catch. I like to pick him up myself, of my own accord, without undue pressure.

To give Aunt her due, her idolatry of Michael is sincere enough. Nothing is too good for him, and the only time when Aunt's purring softness vanishes, giving place to an icy demeanour, the only thing which moves her silkiness of manner and voice—the outward

veneer of sweetness—is when I refuse to listen to Michael's courtship, which is on an average about once a month.

Then the grey eyes scintillate ominously, and a caustic, sneering remark will ooze from those thin lips, to be glossed over perhaps the next moment.

I don't want to be wooed. It's unnecessary trouble, as I constantly tell him. It only upsets all our apple-carts, hers, mine, and his for a day or so to no purpose. I hate being made love to, and I won't when I can help it.

"Don't you hev him at any price, Miss Celia," said Prue, one day, when I had confided to her that I considered Michael's wooing an unparalleled nuisance. She has no intense love for mother or son I know, though it would take a good deal more of the tartar than Aunt displays to make Prudence quit Gable End. Aunt tried it on once or twice, but found it no use. Prue, however, remembers this against her, and adds it up in her reckoning I've no doubt.

"I don't mean to, Prue. Nothing might, could, or would induce me. It's bad enough to be worried with him now. What would it be if I married him? To be obliged to kiss him whether I liked it or not, and wish him at Hong-Kong all the time. No thanks, Prue. I wouldn't marry him if there wasn't another man in Christendom. I don't want to marry anyone. I am quite happy as I am."

"So yew are, dearie. So yew are," asseverated Prue, with considerable unction, and there the matter ended.

I have been free from undue wooing for the last few weeks. I suppose Michael has been too busily engaged in farming operations to find time for it, and I have been consequently exhilarated. I feel, however, that it's looming in the horizon, that I shall not be exempt very much longer now. It's about due—overdue, I might say.

I contrive, therefore, that we should be as little alone as possible, despite Aunt's manoeuvring; thinking probably of the old adage "constant dripping wears away the stone," and wishful that Michael may get his way.

I have, consequently, this afternoon brought a book into the orchard, where, in a snug corner, screened from prying gaze, and slung from bough to bough, is a hammock which Peter under my direction slung for me.

I don't believe even my cousin knows of this leafy haunt, and Aunt never comes into the orchard if she can possibly help it; the grass is too long, and generally wet, she affirms—a phantasy I encourage with commendable vigour.

Here I now lie in drowsy content, the book unread, watching the circling gnats in the summer air.

"Celia! Ce-lia!" calls a voice in the distance, evidently by the sound just inside the orchard gate.

"Bother!" I ejaculate, discontentedly to myself, recognising the owner of the voice, and knowing well enough that if Michael thinks I am in the orchard he will examine every apple and pear-tree sooner than not find me. I have never known him give up anything yet in my long experience of him, which is saying a great deal for his obstinacy of purpose.

"Celia!" he calls again, and the voice is getting nearer now.

Knowing the futility of attempted concealment, and that the fatal, much-dreaded hour has come, I lean out of the hammock and cry faintly,—

"Here I am, Michael. What do you want?" He comes swinging along over the long grass, making a deep step where he treads.

"I've been looking for you everywhere. I want to show you the moleskins I've got for you as you wanted," he begins, taking four little soft-furred moles out of his side-pocket, which I thought looked bulky and ill-setting as he came towards me, and holding them out for my closer inspection.

"Poor wee things!" I say, striking the fur with my fingers. "I am almost sorry I asked

you to get me some now; they were happy enough in the ground burrowing. Better have left them in peace, after all." I end, regretfully.

"I thought you wanted them so much," he returns, rather moodily. "I've been trying to trap these for a week past, and now you don't want them."

"I am sure I thank you very much for the trouble you have taken, Michael; I wish though"—half fretfully—"that you would not always take for gospel whatever I may happen to express on the spur of the moment. I never know my own mind two minutes together on those trivial kind of things. Why do you?"

"Why!" he echoes, stooping and laying the little dead moles on the grass, side by side, and drawing a three legged wooden milking stool towards him to sit down, "because I'm a fool, I suppose!" bitterly.

"Oh, no!" I put in, with quick amiability, "that is not the reason at all. You do yourself an injustice when you say that, because you are by no means a fool—anything but a fool, in fact."

"Well, what is the reason then?"

"That's precisely what I first asked you!" I rejoined, still amiably, being in an argumentative frame of mind, and hoping that if we can only sustain a long discussion on unurdanities, I may perchance escape the greater evil, and ward off whither we are tending.

"Celia, why do you ridicule me whenever I speak? Will you ever be serious?"

"I really can't say! I should think probably not. I am not a member of the serious family, and I decline to belong to it. Anyway, I have no wish to ridicule you. I didn't think that a child like me could ridicule a man of your years. You give me credit for being more important than I thought I was!"

"You are playing with me!" he asserts, coldly, "but I will not be put off from week to week, month to month, like this—"

"Oh! won't you, I think to myself. You'll do as I choose about that, I rather fancy.

"No, this dalliance must end! I tell you Celia, you are breaking my heart!"

"Well, then, I'll buy and present you with a sixpenny bottle of diamond cement, to put the two pieces together again," I rejoin, tantalisingly, which is wrong perhaps, under the circumstances; but I have become hardened from much experience, and cannot affect to tell the awfulness of the situation, as I otherwise might do.

"Pshaw!" he ejaculates, angrily. "You may laugh as you please, but I am telling you the truth—though you don't seem to believe me!"

"On the contrary, Michael! You have told me the very same thing so often that I am fain to believe you at last. I doubt no longer, but if you refuse my bottle of cement, what will you have instead?"

"You know what I want, Celia. It isn't the first time I've asked you for it, so you cannot pretend to misunderstand me. I want your love."

"Do you?" I put in very hastily. "Well then, Michael, once for all give up wanting, because it's one of those things you will never get. Have not I said so over and over again? It's no use, indeed it is not," looking straight at him to emphasise my words.

The swarthy face looks back at me, and the harsh voice sounds a tone harsher than before, as he iterates, bitterly,

"Celia, you are perfectly heartless."

"I very much fear I am. I have thought so myself before now. There is a nice round pebble where my heart ought to be. Why will you not take a plain no for answer? What would you have me say or do? I cannot pretend to adore you, can I?" elevating my eyebrows in real distress.

"I don't require that at all."

"Well then, for goodness' sake, say what you do want," I rejoin, tartly, "for really, Michael, it's too tiresome. Upon my word, I don't believe you know yourself."

"Oh yes I do, Celia!" he interrupted, eagerly. "I want you to marry me."

"Ah!" with a little gasp, for the blow has fallen at last, giving one foot a vicious lunge out in the hammock, making it swing to and fro for a moment or so. "Well then I won't. I am not in love with you, and I don't see why I should marry you," raising my voice aggressively.

"I should make you love me in time."

"No, no. You would make me detest you, Michael; and pray then where should we both be, I wonder. A nice thing to detest your husband, I must say, and that is assuredly what I should do, if I did what you ask and married you! Now I know what is best for you, believe me, if you do not; and I say again—and do please let it be for the last time—that I won't marry you. Be sensible, cousin mine. If I happen to be the figurative moon in this case, do not like a spoilt child cry after it."

"Celia!" he begins, feverishly, getting up from the wooden stool and stepping to my side against the hammock; "you must marry me." I sigh heartily, for my wise counsel seems thrown away on him. He refuses to recognise and accept my no.

"You should never say *must* to a woman," I mutter doggedly; "because it only makes her more obstinate to take her own way."

"You *must*, you *must*!" he goes on, not heeding me; "how else will all the years of my life be bearable? Answer me that!"

"Can't," shaking my head, callously. "Give it up. Give me an easier riddle to guess."

"I swear you shall marry me," he avers.

"And I swear I won't. So as we have both

relieved our feelings, and sworn according to our several minds, we will, as it pleases you, drop the disputation. We've worked it completely threadbare between us; I for one am sick to death of it," turning restlessly to and fro in my hammock. "And now, thanks very much, for those little mole-skins. What a splendid warm cap they will make me for skating in; that is, if the winter is kind enough to bring in some ice. Ah!" raising my voice pleasantly; "here comes aunt, I desire; to tell us tea is ready, I expect. How the afternoon has flown, to be sure, I did not think it was so late; did you?"

He lifts his head, and without answering me, gazes at the grey merino figure coming floating near; then, still silent, he moves away rapidly through the apple trees, and so to the green cornfield beyond.

Probably he anticipated question and answer which, in his present frame of mind, he does not feel disposed to encounter. Anyway he leaves me solus, in my hammock, awaiting aunt's approach.

"Tea is ready, Celia, dove," she begins, while still a few yards away from me. "Where has Michael gone?" seating herself on the milking stool which her son has but lately vacated. "I hope," with a very suspicious glance at my face; "that you have not been quarrelling with him?"

I always notice that aunt says: "quarrelling with him" not has he been "quarrelling with you?" as if I was invariably the aggressor, which is rather unjust, considering the circumstances.

"No, aunt," I return as nonchalantly as I can. "We have not been quarrelling, because it always takes two people to make one quarrel, and I won't be one of the two."

"I think, my sweet pet," anxiously; "that you do not appreciate Michael's devotion as much as he deserves. Remember, my precious, that it is not every man who would put up with your whims and fancies as he does. His devotion is really something wonderful."

"Yes, he sticks to me like a limpet, I own," in a desponding voice. "I wish he would not!"

"Do not say that. I want my little niece to become my own sweet daughter in time," she begins, graciously, with an extra purr for the occasion; but I notice that the grey eyes

shine a little harder than is their ordinary wont as she utters the charming wish.

"I would rather remain as I am, aunt, thank you," I rejoin, with cold-outspokenness, swinging myself out of the hammock.

"You will not always be of the same mind, my pet. You cannot remember, expect to keep your father and I by your side all your life long. We shall be called away, and then you will need a husband's tender care," with impressive solemnity.

I think to myself, that as far as *her* being called away to join the majority goes, the burden would certainly not be greater than I could bear, but I only murmur,—

"I don't want a husband at all. I won't marry, and I intend to be a nice old maid, and live at Gable End all my life—by myself!" I end very pointedly.

The thin lips draw in suddenly. There is such a quantity of compressed acid that she is obliged to set them tight together, lest it should escape. The eyes give me one darkling sparkle, and then aunt says, very sweet and sugary,—

"Come, my dove, tea will be cold if we keep it waiting any longer, and Prudence has made you some of your favourite rusks. By-the-bye, Prudence is getting very old, almost past her work, I think; those old servants get garrulous nuancess when they become too old. I think your father would do wisely to give her some small present of money and send her away."

"I do not think it would be doing wisely at all," I answer, rather passionately; "I think it would be shameful, and I know dear father would not dream of doing such a thing. To turn Prue away because she's getting old! If she went, I would go too; I would not part with Prue for the universe. When I live here, by myself," very markedly; "I shall have Prue with me," and I stalk indoors.

I think I score one there.

CHAPTER III.

"Head of my father," said Lien Chi, "there are but two ways; the door must either be shut or open. I must either be natural or unnatural."

I HAVE looked at my silver sixpence a round dozen times, since I got up this morning. It is a source of trouble to me in some small sense. Like Lien Chi, I too say "head of my father, there are but two ways," eliminating the following metaphor ariet the door. I must either keep it, or return it from whence it came. Truth to tell, I know not which to do. Indecision, like a persistent mosquito, comes humming and droneing in my ears.

One half-hour I determine to go water-creasing as requested, for I own I should like to see those very brown orbs once again, solely from woman's curiosity. The next thirty minutes finds me morbidly prone to remain away. To go or not to go, for "the door must be open or shut"; go and avow my imposture, and return my hard-earned guerdon, or stay at home, leaving brown eyes to pick his own green meat, and eat his bread-and-butter by himself.

We do not know very much about Mrs Grundy down here, and candidly I lean feverishly towards the going. After all, it is only a little open-air comedy, and he and I the actors. It harms no one, not even ourselves for that matter; and it is certainly very entertaining; at least I find it so, whatever he may do.

I have nothing whatever to occupy my morning hours. It is so hot too. The river would be so cool and nice. I think—yes, I am sure, I will go.

Thus determined I put on my old cotton gown of yesterday, also the sun-bonnet, this is of itself sufficiently bucolic for my part, and with an empty basket I feel once more the water-creas gatherer. I could even cry "creases, fresh wa-ter creases" all the way to the river, if there was anyone to hear, but the way is deserted enough to please St Simon Stylites.

"Nearing my happy hunting-grounda I, Lal

a sleepish kind of thrill, as I look carefully round for the grey Norfolk jacket, but it is *now* est. No outward and visible sign of angling manhood occupies the foreground. No mortal divides the landscape with me. A few sheep browsing on the distant heath ground are the only living, breathing things besides myself in sight.

I suppose, I must have fully expected that my angler of yesterday would be here this morning, or I should not feel as I do—decidedly disappointed by his absence.

I sit down on the bank, close to the water-cress bed, and leaning my chin on my hands—a favourite position of mine—I gaze at the river meandering along on its everlasting way to where it feeds the great clattering, grinding mill at East Marling.

Over the water-mosses, past the brambles, swaying the yellow lilies, or taking with it in its clear depths shoals of tiny dace, darting along swiftly in gaudy company.

There is a languorous charm in the summer morning, a dreamy restfulness in the murmur of the river, the swaying rush of the tall, sedge grasses. In the wood opposite comes a wood pigeon, like a lullaby.

I feel very drowsy—quite sleepy, in fact. Very little more would send me off into a sweet snooze. Oh! gentle sleep!

Ah! I open my eyes, suddenly, with a start, for positively I did go off—for how long I cannot say. I wonder what woke me?

Lifting my lids languidly I perceive a long shadow on the grass beside me, and some one says,—

"Blue eyes! you were nodding!"

On the impulse of the moment I am tempted to take the bull by the horns, and, careless of discovery, answer,—

"Brown eyes! you are right. I was nodding. In fact, not only nodding, but asleep was I."

However, second thoughts, which they say are always the best, shows me that this is an ill-advised impulse, not to be given way to at any hazard. So I only smile up at him in the sunshine and say, softly, still with that drowsy languor full on me,—

"Mornin', master."

"I am glad to see you've kept your word," he goes on approvingly, drawing his rod out of the canvas case, and proceeding to put it together. "I daresay I can find somethin' to give you to do. I haven't forgotten my hair today, that's one comfort, at any rate. What a lovely day it is!"

"Ay! if it's right fair weather," I asseverate, with a country superiority to weather generally, watching him unwind his line and bait the hook.

"Right fair weather!" he repeats, imitating my intonation. "How little you country folks appreciate the glorious sun, when you can call such a day as this only 'right fair!' It's ecstatic weather. Probably though you don't know what ecstatic means. Do you?"

I nod with composure.

"Ah! yes, of course, they teach everything in schools now, aestheticism included. Well, have you spent your sixpence yet?" taking a cigarette case out of his breast-pocket, and lighting one of the contents.

"Now," smiling, and, fumbling in my pocket, bring it triumphantly forth.

"See it has not burnt a hole in your pocket yet, or are you of miserly proclivities, and keep a balance at your banker's?" jokingly.

No doubt he imagines himself a very "King Cophetua and the beggar maid," bantering with a watercress-girl. I rather think he would smile the other side of his mouth if he knew how completely he is being deceived by a cootie mouse.

I make no response to the above, leaving him to infer that it is beyond the reach of my limited country comprehension.

"What's your name, Blue Eyes?" he asks, after a pause, drawing at his cigarette.

"Celia!" I answer promptly, seeing no reason, in this case at least, why I should not

speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, to put it canonically.

"Well, Celia! Let me tell you that I consider you a very creditable sample of Maling rusticity. I think, perhaps, Phyllis would be more suitable for you than Celia, though no doubt your parents knew best when they had you baptised. In my mind, however, you are more of a Phyllis than a Celia. I suppose you have never heard of either damsel for that matter, and I am talking double Dutch. Now, if I put it plainly, and ask you if you are not the village beauty, you will understand that fast enough."

I nod. The mandarin performance is so infinitely easier than speech that I adopt it on every possible occasion.

"Of course you do; and of course I am not the first man who has told you that, am I?"

On reflection I can call to mind that I have heard the same opinion expressed before, consequently, I utter a very placid "Naw."

"Naturally Hodge, or Strephon, or whoever the favoured swain may be, has considerably enlightened you on that point, so my observation has not the merit of extreme novelty. Celia, the belle of Marling! Upon my word, Blue Eyes, you almost make me wish that I was an artist. I'd draw you just as you are, basket of watercresses and all. Unfortunately I can't draw a straight line, much less the female form divine, so I cannot take advantage of you as a model. You might earn a good many silver sixpences that way if you choose. And now, as to Lubin. Who is he, what is he? How much does he earn a week, and when are you to be married?" lazily inquisitive.

"Lubin?" I echo, putting on the bucolic stare. I know well enough what he means, but I intend him to enlarge upon his small humour for my edification.

"My dear Blue Eyes, do not look so wholesomely innocent. There is always a Lubin or a Strephon in Arcadia. And Marling seems to possess all the necessary attributes of an Arcadia on a small scale, including a ready-made Phyllis, 'sweet and tender,' as the poet says. If you don't know what I mean by Lubin I will call a spade a spade, and say, in good old English, a sweetheart!"

"A sweetheart!" I echo, stupidly, getting a little red though, as I repeat it after him, for lack of something better to say for the moment.

To be veracious, I rather think that Michael might come under the above denunciation, but whatever I may choose to do as an actress I will not bring any of the family into the argument, even if I did choose to make brown eyes my father confessor.

"Won't you confide in me?" he goes on presently. "I should like to hear all about Lubin very much. I think I could even go to the length of promising a wedding present. There is a Lubin, Blue Eyes, now, isn't there?"

Constrained to make some kind of answer to this straightforward demand I mutter, low-voiced,—

"I don't know."

"Oh! you don't know, don't you," mocking my Norfolk drawl; "which means to say that you know, but you won't tell me. The question evidently seems distasteful, so we'll pass to mere congenial theme of discussion, namely, lunch. I supply the bread-and-butter, as per yesterday's contract, and you the watercresses. Now I'll pick a handful and give them to you to sort and pick over ready for the repast."

I acquiesce in this sensible and amiable arrangement, and he drags up a large handful of dripping wet cress from its bed—cress and weeds altogether indiscriminately, and deposits it by my side.

I am contentedly engaged in picking out the little bits of moss and weed from the watercress, when the unmistakable sound of voices floats towards me on the calm, still air. Looking up quickly enough, my senses all on the

alert at the instant, I see two figures coming round the bend of the river and along the country road within a few yards of the bank—Sir George Vacher and Michael!

Sir George is bestriding his favourite roan cob, which he keeps at a foot pace, while Michael walks alongside—the two evidently discussing some weighty farming matter, for Sir George owns a good deal of land about, and goes in for farming rather extensively, often, however, deferring to Michael's judgment, of which he has a high opinion. Deservedly so, I am sure, for since Gable End has had his watchful managing eye it has increased in value vastly. Hence we have really much cause to be grateful to him for his watch over our interests.

Now, of all people in the world appearing on the scene, along that unfrequented road, where perhaps a couple or so of ploughmen are the sole passers-by per diem, I'd as lief it should not be these two, Michael especially. Indeed I marvel he should be here, for it is completely out of his beat.

It almost seems to my distorted imagination, as if he came on purpose to mar my little comedy of errors, and hasten the dénouement.

There is no use in bemoaning the untoward circumstance, however. The only thing is to look the matters straight in the face, and meet the situation in the best manner possible. It is hopeless for me to hope he may pass by and not see me. The road is so close to the hawthorn—to close, alas!—and in another minute I shall be presented fall in view.

The angler is supremely and blissfully unconscious of the perturbation of my mind at this juncture; and it is only when they get quite near that he lazily turns his head from the river to scan the approaching pair. It is a matter of no moment to him who "passes by this way," but to me!

I try to assume an unconcernedness I am far from feeling, keeping my head encased in the sun-bonnet diligently turned away from the road, sorting the watercress as if my daily bread depended upon the swiftness of my fingers.

If for a brief second or two I dream that they may perchance, by some wonderful freak of Dame Fortune's, be so engrossed in their discussion as to pass me by unnoticed, I am wakened from my pleasant dream by Michael's voice.

"Celia!" he exclaims, in a tone of the deepest amazement, stopping short and eying where I rest under the hawthorn; I hear, too, that with the amazement mingle also disapprobation.

"Yes! Celia!" I remark, defiantly, eying him back from my sun-bonnet.

"Gin maun doy—I maun doy!" as the man said, and since a dénouement must come let it be over and quickly done.

Sir George has checked his cob on seeing Michael stop, and utter my name.

"Ah, my dear! How are you?" he says, pleasantly, leaning from his horse to shake hands with me, for I have risen and gone over to them.

"Quite well, thanks, Sir George," I return, low voiced, hoping that the angler, those very few yards away, may not hear that all traces of my late sing-song lingo have disappeared—"Softly and suddenly vanished away," like the baker in "Hunting the Snark." Also wondering, if he hears, what he thinks of it all.

You certainly look the picture of health, my dear, but then you always do, for the matter of that," says old Sir George, gallantly, patting the cob's neck to keep him still. "How is it we haven't seen anything of you at the hall lately? Lady Vacher has got some new sunflower patterns from London to show you when you come. Oh! and tell your father from me that I've bought a new picture, a copy of a Velasquez—they tell me it's almost as good as the original itself, but I want him to come and give me his opinion of it before its hung. I expect he's seen the original, and will know at once whether it's a good copy or

not. I shall be at home any evening this week, tell him from me, and I've a first-rate cigar to give him. Say I hope he'll come soon. Don't forget, now."

"No, I won't forget. Father will be delighted, I know, at the chance of seeing a good picture."

During this colloquy Michael has been standing silently by, eying the angler's back with a lowering glance.

I mentally wonder what this fisherman thinks, and edge round a little to see if he is taking any notice of the group near him.

No; from appearances, seemingly not. He is standing very upright on the bank, in exactly the same spot that he was—stiffly upright, it strikes me, holding his fishing-rod with both hands, as if his life depended on his keeping it in that one position.

For all or any movement on his part he might just as well be an automaton angler—a duodecimo edition of Psycho or Zoe.

"I must be getting on back to The Hall for lunch," puts in Sir George, turning to Michael. "Thanks, Laeselles, for those hints of yours about that land drainage for the brakefield. I'll have it begun at once. The men shall begin on it to-morrow. That brake has been an eyesore to me for years past. Perhaps you wouldn't mind giving a look at the men now and again while they are on the job."

"Yes, certainly I will with pleasure, Sir George," responds my cousin, still with steel grey eyes fixed on the automaton.

"Thanks! there's a good fellow. I'm much obliged to you. Good-bye, Celia, my dear! Don't forget to give your father my message, and come with him. Lady Vacher, is always delighted to see young faces about her. Good-bye!" and the old baronet raising his hat, trots away on the roan cob, and is soon lost to sight.

I look after him till he turns the corner over the red brick bridge, wondering what will happen next—what epilogue will be spoken to my comedy? We all three stand in grim silence. A dummy trio. Then grappling with fate, and taking the bull by the horns, I look full at Michael and utter a monosyllabic "Well!"

He, facing me, answers coldly,—

"What are you going to do? are you coming home, or are you going to remain here?" with a glower at the unconscious broad back.

"I really don't know!" contemplatively: "what are you going to do?" indifferently.

"I! Oh, I am going home," with emphasis, "you, of course, can please yourself."

"I am fully aware of that," I return somewhat shortly, for Michael speaks to me exactly as if I were a naughty child. Perhaps I am, I am not sure, "What time is it?" I inquire, as if time were the only obstacle in the path of my remaining.

"Ten minutes to one," taking out his watch, and surveying it for my benefit.

"Dear me, I had no idea it was so late. I suppose I had better come too."

"I should say you had," he mutters, with a significant glance at the automaton fisherman; "but as I said before, please yourself."

"I fully intend to," I rejoin, jauntily, fully determined not to be nonplussed at any price; and having thus signified my intention I move closer to the hawthorn with the intention of regaining my basket, while Michael saunters forward a few paces in advance.

Then it is that I cannot make up my mind whether to pick up the basket and walk off without another word; or to say something, and what? Apology seems out of place; besides, I am not one atom sorry. Why should I be? It was his fault in the beginning. A return to the Norfolk lingo is ridiculous. The joke will at once lose its exquisite point.

Bother the man! I wish he would help me in this difficulty. If he would only turn round and laugh, or say how much he enjoys the merry jest, it would be so much easier for me; but no "tattered hoggart" in a field to scare away birds was ever more stolidly un-

movable than my late genial, pleasant companion. Strange that he seemingly cannot regard it in the same light as I do. Strange, but true.

A moment's irresolution, then I march boldly up to that broad back, and say, somewhat feebly I own,—

"I am going now."

It is no very startling remark, but at the sound of my voice, my own original one, not the country drawl, evidently addressing him, he turns swiftly, and faces me. Never, no never, shall I forget the expression of his face. It is full of the most intense and unconcealed mortification. Perhaps he considers himself an injured individual.

"I am going now," I affirm again, partly to break an uncomfortable silence, partly to force him to make some kind of answer, be it good, bad, or indifferent. "You can keep the basket of watercress if you like!" I end, amiably, to show him that I at least am not cross.

He lays his rod down flat on the bank, takes up the basket, and hands it to me.

"I would not deprive you of it for worlds!" he answers, stiffly, all the pleasant, smiling geniality of half-an-hour back vanished from voice and manner. It makes me feel, somehow, that I have been a naughty child, and yet I really did not mean to be! That he is huffy is most evident.

"It is not depriving me at all!" I murmur, quite quashed by that freezing tone; "if you wish to have them—pray keep them!" and I tender him back the disputed basket of watercress, hoping he may accept it in the light of a peace-offering. But no.

Taking off his hat, he makes me a low, sweeping bow as if I were a duchess, and says: "Good morning!" distinctly ignoring my olive-branch in the shape of water-cress. Then he deliberately turns his back on me, takes up his rod, and goes on fishing before my very eyes.

The tinge of irony in that sweeping bow, bareheaded, and cold polite "good morning," annihilates me. It says as plainly as it can,—

"Go, I am disgusted with you! You have been making a fool of me; go." A mute reproach. There is nothing further to be said or done. The epilogue to my little comedy has been spoken. Yesterday, I made my *début*, today make my exit. *C'est tout fini.*

Basket in hand, I trudge after Michael, lingering on the road, some paces away, his hand in his pockets. We walk on silently for a moment or two, then he says, abruptly,—

"Who's that man, Celia?"

"Which man? What man? Where?" I answer quickly, looking all round me as if I expected to behold some wondrous novelty in the shape of mankind on the horizon, knowing quite well in my inner consciousness who he means; but by this time I have recovered a little from my total annihilation, and ready to do battle on the smallest provocation.

"You know what I mean," he jerks out, sulkily; "though you pretend you don't."

"But I don't see any man, Michael," endeavouring to be jocular.

"Well, that fisher fellow on the bank you were hob-a-nobbing with when Sir George and I came up."

"If by *that man* and *that fisher fellow* you happen to mean *that gentleman*," with emphasis, "who was standing near me holding his fishing rod, and trying hard to catch some fish when you came on the scene; well, I am extremely sorry to inform you that I really cannot answer your natural inquiry, for the very good reason that I do not know."

"Not know?" regarding me amazedly, "do you mean to say that you are in the habit of picking up any stray snob who may chance to come fishing the Marling river from Heaven knows where?"

"And Heaven has at present kept the knowledge to itself," I return, jocosely, but I certainly did not mean to say it, and I don't think, moreover, that I did say so. "As to picking up a 'stray snob,' as you obligingly designate

him, the gentleman you speak of weighs, I should think, at a casual glance, quite eleven stone, if not more. Not being a female acrobat, or a strong woman of the company, I could hardly 'pick up' eleven stone odd, as if it were a ball of cotton wool. Your remark, Michael, is not apposite at all, believe me," smiling pleasantly; but my cousin refuses to be anything but sweetly grumpy, meeting my witicism with a surly,—

"Pshaw!"

And also "Pish!" and, maybe, "Pooh!" I quote, soberly, for by this time my spirits have considerably risen.

"You are perfectly incorrigible, Celia!" disgustedly.

"I am, Michael, incorrigible. I wonder you take so much interest in me as you do."

"Cannot you see for yourself that such a proceeding is, to say the least, extremely—well, extremely unconventional."

"I hear it now, certainly," nodding my head.

"And pray," he begins again presently, in what he intends for a sarcastic tone of voice, seeing that I will not cry puccavi, as he wishes me to do, "if I may be permitted to be so curious on what may not concern me, for how long have you condescended to make a companion of this man? How long has it pleased you to gather stray comrades in your morning wanderings as opportunity offers—for a day, a week, a month past?"

"Let me see now," I return, thoughtfully, as if trying to remember. "Was it a week, or a month, or a day? I am inclined to think it must be only a day when I come to think about it. Yes, a day—twenty-four whole hours!"

"Cad of a fellow!" he mutters, unable to find a vent peg for his wrath.

"Well, is there anything else your royal highness would like to cross-question me upon while the subject is red-hot, because 'dis chile' is ready and willing? You shall be permitted to be as curious as you please."

"I shall make it my business to find out who the snob is;" he grumbles on, unable to parry my badinage.

"Do, Michael," I acquiesce cheerfully; "do, and I for one shall be eternally grateful to you; for to tell you the truth I am awfully inquisitive on that very point myself. I was dying to ask him his name, race, age, and occupation all the time, only I hardly liked to. Now, it will come over so much nicer from you than it would have done from me. In fact, while curiosity is still strong upon you, I should just run back now and ask him for his little bit of pasteboard. It would save a good deal of unnecessary trouble in the future, and satisfy both our inquisitive minds at one and the same time, unless, of course, you prefer the more dignified method of ferreting out what you want to know. But as you said to me just now, 'you can please yourself!'"

Michael's feelings on my harangue are clearly too deep for words. He neither follows my admirable advice, or vouchsafes me a word of thanks for it, but stalks along by my side completely mumchance, his lips tightly closed. He knows by this time that an outburst of temper, no matter how angry he may be, does me no harm, and himself no good.

When Michael is most ill-humoured I am correspondingly amiable. I will not quarrel. We might, had I allowed myself to be upset, had a fierce wrangle over the poor fisherman—a war of words and looks, ended goodness knows where; but that I have successfully staved off.

As we reach the orchard swing gate I put my hand on his arm.

"Poor old thing!" I murmur, soothingly. Then I run along the narrow path to the house, and leave him to follow with mollified wrath. My petite *comédie* is over, and the curtain drops. Strange, but I am sorry that it falls.

(To be continued.)

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MY ROSE-GARDEN.

This wild rose-garden of mine—
Come enter it, you who will;
The sunbeams over it shine,
And on every tangled vine
The dew is glistening still.

Here, crimson-petaled, unfold
The richest roses of love;
Though sprung from the dark earth-mould,
There gleams in each heart of gold
The light of the sun above.

Here, pale with his frosty breath,
In a nook where the spider weaves,
Blossoms the rose of death:
Like a white soul bursting its sheath,
Or a dove asleep in the leaves.

Here are buds for the maiden's breast,
Blushing because they unclose;
And brier than the rest,
With last night's dew oppressed,
The poet's golden rose.

I have planted this garden of bloom,
So that, when I am dead,
Each wind that brings the perfume
Of the roses over my tomb
Their fragrant petals may shed.

I. M.

OPALS AND DIAMONDS.

CHAPTER VIII.

"WELL, have you anything to tell me?" inquired Maud the next morning, as she and Maggie strolled through the rose-garden, where Gloire de Dijons, Aimée Véberts and Lord Raglans nodded and swayed in the gentle breeze, alongside the pale, dewy tea-roses and other choice specimens of the "queen of flowers." "You were so fast asleep last night, or rather this morning, when I went up to our room, that it was impossible to wake you, though I tried hard enough, for I wanted to hear the news."

"Did you?" said Maggie, blushing guiltily; for after seeing from the picture-gallery she had gone up to her bedroom, and, tossing off her costly trappings, had crept into bed as quickly as possible, not caring, after the stormy scene through which she had just passed, to encounter her sister, and be cross-questioned by her. So she had feigned to be asleep, and had answered none of the questions put to her.

"Of course I did—and do, for the matter of that. I saw you leave the ball-room with Sir Lionel some time before the programme was finished. Where did you go?"

"To the picture-gallery."

"Oh, indeed! A nice retired spot for lovers. Well, did he propose again?"

"Yes."

"And, then, I am to congratulate you?"

"No-o," faltered her sister.

"No! You don't mean to say that you have been foolish enough—wicked enough to refuse him again!"

"No."

"Then what have you done, in the name of goodness?"

"Asked for time—time to think about it," replied the young girl, with downcast eyes.

"How much time?" demanded Maud, with a thrill of triumph, for she knew that temporizing meant surrender.

"A week."

"And will you give him an answer then?"

"Of course, I must."

"I hope it will be a sensible one, and that you will let no foolish scruples stand in the way of your advancement."

"Maud, don't!" implored her sister, twisting her slender fingers together till the nails bruised the soft white flesh. "You torture me. Have you no feeling—no pity? Think how I shall despise myself if I am false to one—nay, false to both."

"I don't see why you should despise yourself. You love Lionel. You mistook mere liking—mere friendship—for a warmer feeling with regard to Terence, and surely that is no reason for making yourself and the man you love miserable forever. You should—"

"Don't—don't!" cried Maggie again, "don't speak of it. Give me this week to think over it quietly. Leave me in peace, or I shall go mad!"

"Of course I won't speak of it if you don't wish it," replied Maud, soothingly, startled by the wild, hunted look of pain in the violet eyes, feeling she might go too far, and do more harm than good. "Let us change the subject. Doesn't the park look lovely to-day?"

"Yes."

"How charmingly situated the Dower House is, there in the heart of the woods. The Dowager Ladies Molyneux have nothing much to complain of when they are obliged to leave the Hall. I wish Eunice would take us over it. Such a quaint old place must be well worth inspecting, and I believe there are treasures of 'curios' there, gathered from time to time by different dowagers and members of the Molyneux family."

"Yes," assented the other again, hardly listening.

"I think if the Hall were mine that I should spend part of my time at the Dower House. It must be more cosy in winter."

"Perhaps so. Yet no one who had a right to live at the Hall would ever care to leave it, I think," and Maggie's eyes dwelt fondly on the grand house, with its oriel windows, peaked gables, and old world aspect.

She loved it, this ancestral home of an ancient race. It was dearer to her than any other spot in the whole world. She had played in its vast rooms and dim corridors as a child, had wandered in the woods and parks that surrounded it as a girl, and something deep down in her heart told her she would probably live in it as a wife and a mother.

"Not for long," agreed Maud. "There is little or nothing wanting to make it an ideal place of abode. It has only one drawback in my eyes."

"And what is that?"

"After being here our own place seems so wretched and poverty-stricken I quite dread to go back to it."

"Well, you have three days more to be happy in then, as we don't go back until Monday."

"True. Yet the contrast will seem all the greater when we do return. I almost envy Kate, as she goes back to-day."

"Not really, Maud?" quiered Maggie, looking at her anxiously, for she felt the time had come when she might say a word for the lovesick Hussar.

"Why not?"

"Because I should have thought it would be pleasant to you to stay in any house where Clifford Clinton was."

"Would you, really?"

"Yes, really. You care for him, don't you?"

"Yes, I suppose I do," carelessly responded her sister.

"And will you be his wife when he asks you?"

"Well, really, my dear, I think it will be quite time enough to make up my mind when he does ask me."

"You know that he will do so some day."

"He may not. Perhaps he is only amusing himself with a little flirtation."

"Maud, how can you say such a thing! You know he worships the ground you tread on, and you also know that you check him when, ever he tries to propose. He would have done so long ago but for your coldness, and fear of being refused. How can you do it?" went on the young girl, warmly. "How can you throw away and value so lightly the treasure of his love? He is such a good, honest fellow, it is cruel to treat him as you do."

"Is it?" demanded the elder Miss Randal, coolly.

"You know it is. You ought to be kinder to

him. I wish you would promise me to marry him when he asks you; there is nothing to hinder you from saying yes—nothing stands between you and your happiness," she added, with a sigh.

"How do you know, little Solomon? I may have a skeleton in the cupboard, and I couldn't make any promises, for I might break them, and that would be a dreadful thing to do. And there is the pony-phæton going up to the house, so we had better make haste, or we shall not be in time to say good-bye to Kate before she goes. We must postpone our interesting conversation indefinitely;" and without another word she walked off across the rose-garden, and joined the group on the terrace, who had come out to see Miss Randal off, leaving Maggie, who followed slowly, quite in the dark as to whether she had done any good or not.

"Just in time, girls, for a fond farewell," said Eunice as they approached, pulling on her driving gauntlets. "We are going off."

"Good-bye, my dears," said Kate, kissing them in her usual motherly fashion. "I shall expect you on Monday."

"Yes," they both answered together.

"That is to say, if we let them go then," observed the Baronet, with a tender glance at the whilom Ice Queen's pale face.

He wasn't at all anxious for them to go. He wished them to stay till the following Thursday, the day on which Maggie's week of grace expired—the day on which she was pledged to give him her answer; and he felt he would be surer of her if she was under the same roof with himself, though he hadn't much fear. She loved him—he had heard it from her own sweet lips—and he felt that she would not, could not, say "no" to him again. It is so hard for a woman to refuse the man she loves anything, let honour strive as it will. A great passion—a great love—is the strongest thing in the whole world. It breaks down barriers, levels inequality of birth, sweeps away pride, triumphs over want of money, flings creeds and faiths and plighted troth to the four winds, and gains its own end, despite obstacles and resistance—conquers everything, and ends only—is vanquished only—by the irresistible power of Death.

"Yes," chimed in Eunice, "don't expect them till you see them."

"Very well, I won't," agreed Miss Randal.

"That is right. I am only sorry that you are obliged to go home," said the Baronet, cordially.

"Thanks. I am sorry, but as Laura is still staying with the Travers, I don't like to leave my father long alone."

"You are a dutiful daughter," whispered Thornton, who with the Comte intended to ride after the phæton, and escort the ladies safely to their destination, though the Parsonage was little more than a mile from the Hall. "Why didn't you send one of your younger sisters?"

"Oh! I they enjoy gaiety so much, it would be a pity to deprive them of it."

"And don't you?"

"Yes," answered Kate, with her sweet, calm smile; "but I am older, more sober. And then I am housekeeper, my presence is more necessary at home than theirs."

"I see," said the Squire, looking rather disappoind, for he began to reflect that Mr. Randal might be the reverse of anxious to part with a daughter who was evidently his right hand, his housekeeper and amanuensis, and a sweet, womanly creature to boot.

"I hope you will let me call? I should like to know your father."

"Certainly. We shall be very pleased to see you."

"Thanks!"

And then the gentlemen mounted their horses, and Kate seated herself in the phæton; and Eunice, touching the cream-coloured ponies with her dainty parasol-whip, they sprang off at a great pace, and were soon lost to sight under the shade of the branching limes that flanked the avenue.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DOWER HOUSE.

"WHAT shall we do to amuse ourselves to day?" asked the Baronet, after watching them disappear in the distance.

"Anything you like, Li," answered Clinton; "so long as we shall not be called upon to display much energy."

"What, are you run down after one night's dancing?"

"Yes, very much so, and inclined only for the *dolce far niente*."

"Lazy fellow."

"Don't call me that; it isn't fair. Just think of what I went through last night."

"In what way?"

"The way of wearing wigs and overgrown hats. My head will never feel comf again," and the captain lifted his straw hat, and let the summer wind play with the fair curls that clustered thickly on his brow.

"Shouldn't have chosen such a dress. It was vanity made you do it. You thought it would be becoming," said Lionel jestingly.

"And so it was," replied his friend, coolly. "I looked like Adonis and Narcissus rolled into one. I appeal to you, Miss Maggie. Didn't I look fascinating?"

"Very fascinating."

"I won't ask you," he went on in a low tone, turning to Maud; "because, I know, only too well, that you never have a good word to say of, or for me."

"You are not quite just," she responded quickly, in an equally low voice, giving him a bright glance from her blue eyes, for there was a considerable amount of bitterness in his manner, and she had no wish to drive away her wealthy wosser; "and, at any rate, I have never said anything disparaging."

"True. But I want more than that."

"And perhaps you will get it some day," she rejoined, with a little rippling laugh.

"When? Tell me when I may hope," he began eagerly.

"No, no, you must wait patiently," she answered, and then turning to the others, asked quickly, "Well, have you decided what you will do?"

"Yes," announced the Baronet. "We are going on the river. Do you care to come also?"

"I should like it above all things," she answered at once, knowing that it would do no good to let her sister go alone with Sir Lionel, as matters were in abeyance between them for the space of a week, and not wishing to be left alone with Clinton, who looked very much as though he would like to say something despatchately tender, after her little encouraging speech.

"And you, Clifford?"

"I shall be charmed. That is to say, if you don't expect me to do too much hard work."

"No. I promise you that. We will paddle up a little way, and then pic-nic on the banks. Merton," he added, to a gorgeous creature, with flesh-coloured legs and a powdered head, who happened to be within hail, "will you see that a lunch-basket is taken down to the boat house at once."

"Yes sir," responded the man, disappearing to give the order.

"We may as well stroll slowly down, and get ourselves aboard."

And away they went, through the gardens and park to the river; and getting into the dainty skiff they went up against stream, Sir Lionel pulling steadily and easily.

"What place is that?" asked the Captain, as hazily steered, seated on the softly-cushioned seats between his fair companions, looking at the clustered chimneys of an old house amid the trees, bathed in sunshine.

"The Dower House."

"Queer-looking place."

"Yes, isn't it?" chimed in Maud. "I should so much like to go over it, and pry into all its odd nooks and corners."

"That wish can be easily gratified. We will

land and go over, if old Dame Twerton will let us in."

"I doubt whether she will," remarked Maud laughingly; "for whilst you were away we tried more than once to gain admittance, and were sternly refused, with a rough 'Gang awa, I want na bodies speerin' about the place,' followed up by the door being shut in our faces."

"That is just her way," agreed the Baronet, with an amused smile on his handsome face. "She is an honest creature, but surly and gruff to the last degree. Perhaps though, as the place is mine, she will let me in."

"Does she live there alone?" inquired Maggie, as they went down a deep hollow lane, where the dog-roses climbed in wild confusion, and the woodbine trailed, and the blue convolvulus reared its delicate head amid the untrimmed hedgerows.

"No, she has her son there part of the time, and his child, so she is not quite isolated. But I am sure she would not have the smallest objection to live there by herself. She has been in our service over sixty years, and all that time she has spent there, for she married my grandfather's valet, Inverton, a native of Wingfield, and he was a great favourite with Sir Robert, who for some unaccountable reason preferred living at the Dower House to the Hall, and spent the last years of his life and died there."

"That was strange," said the young girl, reflectively.

"Yes, I could never understand his preference for such an antique place."

And the Baronet looked as though he couldn't, but on Maud's face was a queer expression of knowledge mingled with a look of fear, for she was beginning to guess the truth; and she said hastily, with great animation,—

"I can. There is an old-world charm over the whole place, which is very fascinating to some natures. This garden is delightful."

And it was truly a sweet, quaint spot. There were old-fashioned plants in great profusion; clove gilly-flowers, yellow lupins, purple bell-shaped foxgloves, scarlet pimpernel, white ox-eyes, damask roses, and an herb-bed, containing sweet-scented marjoram and all manner of antediluvian simples. A running brook made tender melody as it sang merrily along by the trimly-clipped yew-hedges; oriental poppies flaunted their gay blooms in the borders, rocks caved in the tall tree tops, and over all the olden oaks and elms threw the shadow of their thickly-leaved branches, through which the sunlight fell in chequered patches on the velvety turf.

"Yes, I suppose it is. At any rate, those gentlemen seem to approve of it," and he pointed at an elderly cook, accompanied by a bevy of ancient hens, who were strutting about, scratching up the earth and clacking vigorously, and at a venerable, grey-muzzled dog, who lay basking in the warm sunrays, blinking and winking, seemingly too old to get up and bay at them.

"She will hear that if she is not stone deaf," he went on with a laugh, giving the bell a terrific pull.

"And if she is, too," remarked Clinton, "that peal was enough to wake the dead."

And he was right; for in a minute or two the massive door, barred and studded with iron, was opened to the length of a guarding chain, and the figure of a woman appeared in the aperture—a woman well-stricken in years, with a wrinkled, yellow skin, a nose like a hawk's beak, and deeply-sunken eyes that glared with a wild, uncanny expression from the overhanging, bushy brows. Her face was framed in a cap-frill so huge that it looked more like an Elizabethan ruff than anything else; her shrivelled, scraggy arms were bare to the elbow, and over her shoulders, loosely girt about the waist, was a riding polisse, such as was worn by women of quality in the days of "bonnie Prince Charlie," with a triple cape, and ample skirts, which gave a grotesque appearance to the bent, withered form.

"What's ringin'?" she demanded, in a hush, grating voice.

"I, dame Twerton," responded the Baronet, stepping forward.

"Who's you?" she queried, peering at him keenly.

"I am Lionel Molyneux," he answered, with one of his sunny smiles.

"Lionel Molyneux! Heavens persairve's! Thee young maister," she burst out in startled tones. "Who's wantin' that ye come here? It's too early yet."

"I want to shaw these ladies over the house."

"Na, na," she cried quickly; "dinner enter this hoose. Gang back laddie, gang back. The time has na come for thee to cross the thrassel o' Molyneux's Rest."

"I think it has, dame," he said, pleasantly, though firmly.

"Na, na, dinner say that—dinner say that. Ye no ken wha's t means."

"Well, whether I do or not, it comes to the same thing, for I am comin' in. So be good enough to unchain the door."

A moment the old crone gazed at him doubtfully; then seeing he meant what he said, she slipped off the chain and threw wide the heavy door, muttering and mumbling to herself the while, in an uncanny fashion, much to the amusement of Clinton and Maggie, an amusement, however, that was not shared by Maud, whose fears and misgivings were increasing rapidly, and who wished heartily that they had not come to the Dower House, better known to the peasantry and people around by the significant name of Molyneux's Rest.

"We'll not trouble you, dame," observed its master, as they crossed the dim, marble-flagged hall. "Though I have never been here before, I have no doubt that I shall be able to play the part of showman satisfactorily; so we need not keep you from your domestic duties."

"Na, na," answered the old woman, wagging her head backwards and forwards. "I'll no gang, I'll stay. Ye might see wha ye might didna wish ye to."

"Well, just as you like," he said, good humouredly, rather at a loss to account for her persistency. "We'll go in here first," and he pushed open a door and entered a long, low room, panelled shoulder-high, with time-blackened oak, and painted above in dark green, with heavily-beamed ceiling, and narrow casement windows; not a pleasant apartment by any means, with its stiff suite of Chippendale furniture, upholstered in black baizecloth, and one or two grim portraits, frowning down from the dark walls.

"Nothing much to be seen here," observed Clinton, looking round.

"No. It resembles a prison. Let us see what is on the other side of the hall."

Crossing over they all entered another room, evidently meant for a drawing-room, for, though panelled in the same way, the walls above were painted with exquisite copies of Watteau's masterpieces, "The Ladies of the Old Régime,"

"Life of the Gay Cavaliers," "The Champêtre," and others. The couches and chair were covered with costly ambasson tapestry; spindle-legged tables were dotted about, strewed with china and nick-nacks; in one corner stood a spinet, in another a harpsichord, and side by side with the Watteau pieces hung quaint mirrors and rare miniatures.

"Better than the other."

"Yes. Still I don't think very much of it. Perhaps we shall find something up above," said Sir Lionel, slowly mounting the noble staircase, which was of the same time blackened wood as wainscoted the rooms.

"Ah! this is more to my liking!" he exclaimed, throwing back a door at the top of the stairs, and showing a vast room, with elaborately carved wainscoting, and a polished floor, over which were laid tiger skins from India, wolf skins from Russia, lion skins from Africa, trophies of the chase, won by Sir Lionel Molyneux. Deer's antlers, mooses' horns, foxes' heads and brushes, elephants' tusks, dried snakes, hang on the walls, intermingled with guns, pistols, spears and weapons of all sorts, that gleamed brightly in the ruddy sun-glow; hunting crops, richly mounted riding whips, spurs, stirrups,

bits, both ancient and modern, quaint walking-sticks, stuffed birds, beasts and fishes, including a hideous crocodile, suspended, like Mahomet's coffin, 'twixt heaven and earth, and an owl, with a prodigious white face, and heaps of other curiosities, which are so dear to the hearts of some men.

"Yes, this is famous," agreed his friend. "I wonder why you don't carry these treasures up to the hall?"

"Well, you see this place is really more my mother's than mine. The dowagers come here when the eldest sons marry, and bring their brides to the ancestral halls"—the young man glanced at Maggie as he spoke, and a conscious blush rose to her fair cheek—"so I shouldn't like to touch anything. Besides, to tell the truth, I didn't know I was possessor of all these nice things. As a child I was never let come near the place; then I went to school, and the last ten years, as you know, I have spent abroad. This is the first time I have ever been here—"

"It will na be te last," croaked the old crone, breaking in.

"No, I hope not, dame," he answered, pleasantly. "I like it rather, and have no doubt it will improve on acquaintance," and then the two girls sat on the great, broad seat below the window-sills, and the young men went round inspecting the weapons, handling the swords, criticizing the pistols, and old Nance Twerton stood in the doorway, a queer figure in her antique pelisse, watching them and muttering, and wagging her head.

"Well we've inspected those pretty closely, now which way shall we go?" asked Sir Lionel, looking down the long corridor, which ran to the right and left.

"Ye canno go thise way," announced the dame, planting herself firmly in the middle of the passage at his right.

"Why not?"

"Ye can no ga thise way, far't leads to my room. Ye mun gang theither route, if ye want to see the gran' chambers."

"Oh! very well," he answered at once, going to a great room with a huge four-post bed, decked with sable plumes, that made it look like a hearse. "A pretty view from here," he said to Maggie, who was at his side, looking out of the window.

"Xes, very pretty. But I wonder why this window is barred so strongly? What an odd idea!"

"Yes, isn't it? It puts me in mind of a mad-house."

"Mad-mad-hoose!" cried Dame Tiverton, with sudden ferocity. "Wha's speakin' o' a mad house?"

"I was," acknowledged the Baronet, looking at her with considerable surprise. "The barred window put me in mind of it."

"T'was for the bairns—to keep them fra fallin' oot," explained the old woman, eagerly.

"Oh! I see," said her master, satisfied with the explanation, and going on to another chamber.

But Maud—keen-sighted, far-seeing Maud—was not satisfied with what she considered was a very lame explanation, for she knew that nursery windows were never barred right up to the top; and watching her opportunity, when Nance was occupied following closely at her master's heels, she slipped out of the room, and sped swiftly down the corridor to the end which Nance said was occupied by her rooms. A green baize door faced her.

She pushed hard, it swung heavily and slowly back, showing a short, dark passage with an iron-clamped massive door at the other end. She went on; the door resisted the pressure of her hands. She felt about till her fingers closed on a key; with a mighty effort she turned it in the lock, the door opened inwards and disclosed a padded room, with barred windows, and all the paraphernalia required for raving lunatics.

One glance was enough to show her her suspicions were correct, and that the Dower House was the abode to which the Molyneux were sent when they became afflicted with the dreadful malady, which was the curse of their family, and which had gained the place the

title of Molyneux's Rest; and hastily locking the door she retraced her steps, eager to get Sir Lionel out of the house before he should guess the terrible secret that had been so carefully guarded from him.

"Haven't you seen enough yet?" she asked, in a voice that trembled somewhat, despite her efforts to steady it.

"Yes, I think we have, very nearly. Are you tired? You look pale."

"I am rather," she answered, glad of any excuse that would get him away, "and it feels so cold and damp here."

"Doesn't it?" agreed Maggie, with a shiver that did not escape her lover's observant eye. "I feel quite chilled."

"Do you?" he said, anxiously. "Then we must leave at once. You will soon get warm again in the sunshine," and giving a crown to Nance, he offered her his arm, and descended the staircase, followed closely by Maud and Clinton.

They lingered a little in the quaint garden talking to the old woman's grandchild, a pretty, dusky-faced little girl, who was playing with a clear-eyed kitten, and the delay caused one of the party no small amount of uneasiness; but glancing up, Maud was relieved to find that the barred windows were all at the other side of the house, and that there was nothing to excite suspicion in Sir Lionel's mind if he did study the front of his antique mansion.

However, she was sincerely glad when they were once more in the skiff discussing the dainty luncheon the housekeeper had provided for them, and far from sorry when they were once more gliding down the river on their homeward way.

Maggie also felt relieved on leaving the place. Something had weighed on her spirits, an intangible fear, a nameless horror, for which she was quite unable to account, and which depressed her.

She soon recovered her spirits in the boat. It was so delightful on the river. The birds sang, the sun shone, the drooping trees shadowed the rippling water, the rushes and sedges rustled in the gentle breeze as the dainty craft swept along, leaving a shining track behind her on the sun-kissed stream.

The sky was of a rich, intense blue overhead, with here and there fine white clouds standing up like "winter icebergs on a summer sea," and in the distance were heavy purple ones tinged with gold. Nature wore too fair a garb, too winsome an aspect not to drive away all fear and care from a young mind.

"Truants, where have you been?" asked Lady Molyneux, who was sitting in the rose-garden with Eunice and the Comte when they returned.

"We have been to the Dower House," replied her son, "inspecting all the fine things there."

"Where?" gasped her ladyship, with paling face.

"To the Dower House," he repeated, "Molyneux's Rest. You know I never—"

But he did not finish his speech, for without a word his mother slid off her chair and fell fainting at his feet.

In a minute he had her in his strong young arms, and bore her off to the house; but it was some time before she regained consciousness, and when she did she looked so scared and wild that the family doctor, Mr. Bainbridge, who had been sent for from Wingfield, ordered perfect rest and quiet, and said she must not leave her room.

This order she obeyed partly, for, after a rather lengthy consultation with him, after he left her maid came to Maud to say that her ladyship wished to see her for a few moments.

Maud was dressing for dinner, and when she had put the finishing touches to her toilet she went to her hostess's room.

"My dear," said Lady Molyneux, smiling faintly as she came in, "I am sorry to trouble you just now, but—but will you tell me exactly what occurred at the Dower House to-day?"

Thus adjured Maud detailed exactly what had happened, with the exception of her own discovery of the padded room.

"Then, Li didn't see anything that he didn't like there?" queried his mother, with another wan smile at the conclusion of the recital.

"Nothing whatever. He only saw what he did like—weapons, and skins, and antlers, and all those sort of things that he is so fond of."

"Thank Heaven for that!" murmured Lady Molyneux, looking relieved. "It is rather a guesome place, I think," she went on apologetically, "apt to make one feel dull and depressed."

"I think it a delightful old place—so beautifully situated," returned her guest, determined not to show her knowledge.

"Yes, very prettily situated; but the house itself is so ancient and dull that it would make an undesirable dwelling-place. There, I mustn't keep you any longer," she added, as the sound of the gong rang out, calling the loiterers to dinner. "Don't mention our conversation to anyone."

"Certainly not, dear Lady Molyneux, if you don't wish it. I hope you will be better tomorrow."

"Thanks," replied the elder lady, returning her kiss, "I hope I shall;" and then Maud, not sorry to be released, ran swiftly downstairs, and joined the young people in the dining-room, and sat beside the gallant hussar, and blushed and laughed at his soft speeches and tender nothings in a way that encouraged him, and therefore made him feel very happy, and very hopeful.

CHAPTER X.

"YES."

"I am sorry that I have to go to town to-day," said Sir Lionel, when Monday came round. "I was going to ride over and ask the rector to let you stay a little longer. But this wretched business must be attended to."

"Of course," assented Maggie, looking away over the park and woodlands. "Business before pleasure."

"Yes, but I should like pleasure before business."

"I suppose most of us would," she answered, still not looking at him.

"Would you have stayed?" he next, he queried.

"I—I hardly know. I don't think so. We ought to go home to-day. Kate is all alone, and we have trespassed long enough on your mother's kindness and hospitality."

"Oh! no indeed," he rejoined eagerly. "You know she is more than pleased to have you here. I wish you would stay till my return. I come back on Thursday."

"Thanks," she answered, blushing deeply; "but we really must go home to-day, another time—we—will stay longer."

"I hope so. Well, if you won't stay here, I must come to you on Thursday. You know I expect to hear something pleasant on that day?"

"Yes," she murmured, not daring to raise her eyes to his face, and feeling the carnation red grow deeper on cheek and brow.

"Good-bye now," he went on taking her hands in his. "I see the dog-cart is waiting. I must go, or I shall miss my train."

"Am I to go without even one kiss?" he demanded, after a minute.

And then, as he remained silent, he stooped and pressed his lips to hers, turning and leaving her immediately after.

"We shall miss all these luxuries," remarked Maud, somewhat disconsolately, later on in the day, as she nestled amid the cushions of the Molyneux landau, her homeward way.

"I suppose we shall," agreed her sister absently.

"It is very nice to be rich, and have everything one wishes."

"Yes. Still the wise people say great riches bring great cares."

"They may do so, still I would run the risk if I got the chaise."

"You have the chance, and why you don't take it I can't imagine."

"Who said I wasn't going to take it?"



[ON THE ROAD TO THE DOWER HOUSE—THE MOLYNEUX MYSTERY.]

"Nobody. I draw my conclusions from the way in which you treat Clifford Clinton."

"He doesn't seem to mind—much."

"What can he do? The poor fellow is too much in love to be able to help himself."

"Yes, I suppose so, and I think, though men are dubbed 'lords of the creation' and the 'sterner sex,' that they are generally like a piece of silk in the hands of the women they love, if she is clever enough to manage them properly."

"I quite agree with you. At the same time, though, I think you will 'manage' Captain Clinton off the scene altogether, frighten him away, if you don't take care. He won't always be content to give all, and receive nothing."

"What a Solomon you have become about *affaires de cœur*, lately," said Maud, with one of her sarcastic little laughs. "You need not fear, my dear. I shall only play my adorer just enough to make him thoroughly appreciate and value me when I do condescend to say yes."

"I am glad to hear it," declared Maggie, stoutly. "He is too good to be treated badly."

"I don't intend to treat him badly, at least—not badly, as you mean. I don't appreciate my present surroundings enough to do that," she added dryly, as the carriage drew up before the Parsonage, and they alighted.

"How have you felt, Kate?" she demanded, dropping into one of the rickety Chippendale-chairs in the dining-room, "since we last met?"

"Very well, dear, thank you, as I always do."

"I am certain that I shall feel very ill shortly."

"Why?"

"Why? Because I feel like Cinderella, and know she was greatly indisposed after leaving the prince's palace, and going back to her dirty chimney-corner to rake ashes."

"Was she?" asked Kate, slightly bewildered at the simile.

"She was," responded Maud, gravely; "though the story books may not record it. Still what woman can be clothed in purple, and fine linen, and sup off dainties served on gold plate overnight, and return to rags and delft in the morning without experiencing some unpleasant sensations."

"All women don't experience unpleasant sensations under those circumstances, and I think it is always well to try and make the best of our surroundings," rejoined Miss Randal, seriously.

"But there isn't any 'best' to our surroundings," objected her sister, as her eyes travelled round the shabby room, with its square of threadbare carpet, smoke-blackened walls and ceiling, and dilapidated, old-fashioned furniture. "They are hopelessly bad."

"They might be worse."

"Of course. We might live in a pig-stye, and feed upon nothing but fat pork. I don't know that it would be very much worse," and she cast another disparaging glance at the coarse cloth that covered the table spread for their homely tea, at the thick cups, and huge home-made loaf.

"You wouldn't like the pig-stye, I am inclined to think, and it would be better for you not to go to the Hall, if it unsettles you so much, and makes you so discontented with your own home."

"Well, Kate, there is some excuse," she urged, apologetically. "Everything is done in such style there. A table bright with costly glass, and gold plate, and hot-house blooms, groaning with every dainty and delicacy of the season, and three footmen and a butler to wait on you; bedrooms that are like boudoirs, all satin and lace; drawing-rooms like fairy-land, with something to please the eye wherever it falls; carriages and horses; park-like grounds, everything, in fact, that mortal can

desire, and here—nothing. Nothing but poverty and want, and wretchedness. The contrast is awful to me, and makes me feel envious and covetous."

"Two extremely bad things to encourage. You should check them at once, as it may be your fate to be poor all your life. I hope, Maggie, that you have not come back in the same frame of mind as Maud."

"No, I think not," answered the young girl, slowly. "Though I like pretty things I am not envious, and I love the garden here, it is so wild and beautiful. I am always glad to get back to it."

And so she was, but, still, deep down in her heart was an ardent love for pretty nick-nacks, dainty dresses, charming surroundings, that rendered her home an uncongenial place of abode, and made her long secretly for all the comforts and luxuries money alone can procure.

She was not like Maud—a grumbler, given to air her grievances and longings—and neither of her sisters guessed how much she felt the change from the Hall to the Parsonage, how dingy the old house seemed to her, how coarse the food, and how long and dull the hours of the two days that followed her return home.

"Come out in the garden," suggested Maud, on the afternoon of the second day. "It is simply stifling in the house."

"Yes, it will be pleasanter there," agreed Maggie, and together the two girls went out, accompanied by Jacko, the little lion-dog, and sat under the shade of a spreading chestnut, and Maud read Swinburne out loud, and Maggie stared straight before her, never hearing a word, thinking of Lionel Molynex and of the answer she had to give him on the morrow, the thought of which had driven the wild-rose bloom from her rounded cheeks during the last few days, leaving them white as snow, and giving a strained look to the violet eyes.

(To be continued.)



[LOVE AND JEALOUSY.]

NOVELLETTE.]

MY INNOCENT SISTER.

CHAPTER I.

DENZIL'S RETURN.

"Denzil is coming to-day, Gundred, and you can sit calmly reading," cried a clear, ringing voice; and looking up from my book I saw my sister Persis standing at the long French window of the morning room, the soft lace curtains draping her graceful form like a rich bridal veil, and throwing up the exquisite colouring of her dark glowing face. "Are you never excited about anything?" she continued, laying an emphasis on the last words, and casting a reproachful glance at me. Those great dusky eyes of hers were very expressive.

"Well, and what if he is?" I inquired, with supreme indifference. Denzil Eisdale was my affianced husband, but I did not choose to show the excitement and pleasure that was stirring my pulses and sending the warm blood dancing through my whole being at the thought of seeing him again, after an absence of two years, which he had spent beneath a burning African sky.

I had some notion, a mistaken one I know now, that it was more romantic to hide my love, and so fell into the too common error of assuming an indifference I was far from feeling.

"Gundred, I am surprised at you! Why, if it were my lover who was coming I should spend one half the day at the window, the other at the glass!" laughed my sister, showing a double row of even white teeth between the full red lips, and drawing up her rather well-developed figure as she stared at her own reflection in the glass above the mantelpiece. "Get up, you lazy thing, and come for a walk in the garden."

"No one would think we were sisters, Persis;" I observed, as I rose and closed my

book with a faint sigh. "Look at my fair insipid face beside yours!"

"Insipid! Oh, Gundred! Why your eyes are bluer than an Italian sky, and your hair—well, I sometimes envy you your hair, for I never saw gold so bright nor—"

"Spare me!" I cried, "I have heard enough of my charms for one day," but I could not help the flutter of vanity that thrilled me as I listened to her words. Would Denzil find me fair or would he deem me altered, changed for the worse? We passed out of the house in silence, bending our steps in the direction of the river that flowed through our grounds.

We wandered down the long pathways, under the shade of the limes from which our house took its name, and the cool breeze that fanned our cheeks wafted the scent of new-mown hay across the fields. It was one of those warm days when everything seems to come to one as in a dream; and I had a dreamy sense of the distant lowing of cows, of the soft song of birds in the leaf-laden trees, and the musical ripple of the broad river as it flowed on its way. We had had a glorious spring time, and on this sultry day in August the whole country lay throbbing and blushing beneath the burning gaze of the noonday sun.

In the orchards, for miles round, the sweet, luscious fruit hung ripe on its stem, filling the air with fragrance; and the fields were golden with the tall, yellow corn, among which the scarlet poppies nodded in the breeze that ever and anon swept across from the sea.

I seated myself on the projecting root of an old oak, and leant my back against the trunk. Persis threw herself at my feet on the thick, dry grass, and laid her dark head on my lap.

"What is Denzil like?" she asked, presently, with innocent curiosity, raising herself on one elbow, and throwing a stone into the clear depths of the river; "you know I was at school, and have never even seen his portrait."

Persis had been away a year, during which

time Denzil Eisdale had come down on a visit, and so she had never seen the man who had taught me the sweetest lesson of life.

"Like?" I repeated, rather at a loss for words; "why, he is like any other man—has eyes—"

"Don't be absurd, Gundred," she replied, impatiently; "I mean is he fair or dark?"

"Oh! he has chestnut hair, brown eyes, and a brown moustache," I said, carelessly; "I have his photograph here." And I opened a locket which I always wore on a chain round my throat, and held it towards her.

"Denzil," she cried, a flush overspreading her lovely face; "Is this your lover?"

The pictured face that lay framed in that large-gemmed locket was indeed a handsome one. I could not do it justice were I to describe it minutely, for the chief charm lay in the expression of the somewhat rugged features.

"Yes," I answered, quietly; but my hands trembled as I closed the spring. How I loved him! "Do you think him good-looking?"

"Good-looking? How coolly you speak, Gundred." Her voice was a little scornful. "I have never before seen a face in which power and tenderness were so perfectly blended."

I did not make any answer, but leant back and listened with closed eyes as my sister rattled on in her clear, young voice. It was a pleasure to listen to that voice—so full-toned, clear, yet soft as the sigh of the summer breeze.

The sun was declining, casting long, yellow shadows on the river; and the soft breeze had freshened to a high wind, sounding like the rushing of waters as it swept through the tall, swaying trees, when the hard crunching of feet on the crisp gravel path roused me from my reverie, and I rose hastily from my seat, a feeling of faintness stealing over me in my agitation, for I knew that step—it was that of Denzil—my hero, my king.

Persis rose also, and stood staring at me with wide-opened eyes, but before she could utter a word Denzil was beside me, holding me in a close, passionate embrace; then, as he became aware that we were not alone, he released me.

"This is my sister Persis," I said, and he turned to her with a grave, sweet smile.

"So this is Persis," he remarked, stooping and kissing her, at which she blushed brightly. "Why I thought you were quite a little mite."

"Oh, yes, I am always spoken of as Gundred's little sister," replied Sis, with a soft, low laugh. "Is it not ridiculous? Why I am a head taller than she is, and, after all, three years does not make such a great difference."

"No, it does not," returned Denzil, quickly, "for I should have taken you to be the elder of the two."

She did not make any reply to this, and I feared she was offended, for I knew that no girl likes to be taken for older than she really is.

"Have you seen papa and mamma yet, Denzil?" I asked.

"Yes, and that reminds me, I was sent out here to tell you that Lord Carlyon is coming to dinner and you are to go in directly. How shall I excuse myself?" he said, with mock penitence.

"Don't attempt it," I laughed, as I turned in the direction of the house.

I felt so joyous now that my lover had come that even the loud, rough voices of the carters, as they passed along the country roads with their loads of hay, had a tender under-ring to my ears. Might not some of them have sweethearts waiting for their coming beneath the ivy-enclosed porches of their cottage homes.

As we neared the house we passed by some rose-bushes, and Denzil plucked a beautiful tea-rose and held it out to Persis.

"Wear this in your hair to-night," he said, "it will suit your dark loveliness."

My sister's proud, beautiful face flushed with innocent pleasure at the compliment. She had only just left school, and had not yet learned the art of hiding her feelings. I was delighted to see what good friends they were, for she was my only sister, and I think I worshipped her.

"Come, children," called my father's voice from one of the windows that opened out on to the lawn; and Persis hurried forward, leaving me standing by the rose-bushes, with my lover at my side. My heart beat so that I could find no words to answer, when he bent over me and whispered tenderly,—

"Darling, this is an emblem of your own sweet self."

He placed a pale blush rose in my trembling hands as he spoke; and I think my eyes must have said what my lips could not, for he caught me to him and pressed swift, passionate kisses on my brow, cheeks, and mouth. Oh, the exquisite joy of that moment when I rested my head on his dear breast, loving and beloved!

"Denzil!"

We were in the hall, and I wanted to speak before we joined the others.

"What is it, dear one?" he asked, standing still in the great hall and taking my hands in his own.

"You believe that I am pleased to see you again?"

I am never very demonstrative, but I had meant to say something more affectionate, still he would understand.

"Yes, I do, dearest, for your face is an index to your heart. No thought or wish is unknown to me, and I can read the fresh, pure love that fills your heart for me better than you could tell me yourself," he replied, with a glance that thrilled me through.

How joyously I went up to my own room to dress for dinner, my heart throbbing to the words "My love has come! My love is here!" Carefully I selected a robe I knew he would approve of—a pale, delicate blue gauze, and adorned my neck and arms with priceless pearls, and then, when my toilette was finished, I ran down to my sister's room to ask her opinion of my choice. A flush of girlish vanity

had risen to my cheeks, and as I passed the glass on my way out I could not help but see that I was beautiful with a fair, flower-like beauty that depended, perhaps, a great deal on complexion and expression, for my features were irregular, but still beautiful and my heart bounded with joy.

But, as I opened the door, my heart sank, and a strange uncontrollable feeling of jealousy shot through me. Denzil was standing in the centre of the apartment, the long trailing robe of crimson satin falling in graceful folds round her splendid figure. Gleaming diamond buckles looped back the polonaise of rich black lace, and diamonds sparkled on the snowy bosom and perfect arms, and glittered in the heavy masses of her glossy black hair. But it was her face! Never had I seen her look so lovely. Her great luminous eyes were literally ablaze with excitement, and a delicate vermilion stained the clear olive cheeks.

"Gundred," she said, turning to me with a sweet smile, "do you like my dress? It is in honour of your lover, not Lord Carlyon, you know."

"It is superb!" I replied, but I could not help wishing that she had chosen a more simple attire, although I reproved myself for the unworthy feeling of jealousy that had swept over me on first entering the room.

"You look lovely!" she cried, as I advanced to her side, and the light of the wax candles fell upon me. "You have such perfect taste," she added, with a little sigh.

"We must make haste, Persis," I said, putting my arm round her and drawing the stately head down to a level with my own. I was sorry for my petty jealousy, and that kiss was a kiss of peace, though she knew it not.

"Come, then, I am ready," was her reply, and together we descended the broad stairs, up which the gas in the chandelier in the great hall below sent up a flood of brilliant light, making the jewels on our necks and arms flood and sparkle.

The dining-room, a large square apartment, rendered dark by the giant chestnut that skirted the lawn, was empty, at least, I thought so; but as I closed the door a tall figure emerged from behind the heavy damask curtains and came towards us. It was Lord Carlyon.

"I was hoping you would be early, as usual," he said, holding out a shapely, yet strong hand.

Persis smiled her rare sweet smile as she greeted him, and as I saw the look of worship in his eyes I could not help wishing for his sake that she would some day learn to love him as he loved her. Lord Carlyon's was a face that inspired trust. There was something so true in the frank, rather boyish features, broad high forehead, and bright blue eyes.

As he bent his curly brown head to whisper some compliments to my sister, I caught sight of Denzil coming along the terrace that led from the dining-room to the garden, and leaving them, I stepped out of the window and joined my lover.

"My dainty white rose!" he murmured, clasping my hands and gazing so intently at me that the blood mounted to the roots of my hair.

We stood in perfect silence after that, our eyes wandering over the fair undulating land that lay before us, covered with a silvery mist of heat, and lighted only by the pole-star, gemmed summer sky. The harsh cry of the corn drake came distinctly across the fields in the still evening air, sounding almost pleasant in the silent absence of all other sounds. Presently we saw the old white-haired butler passing to and fro in the now lighted dining-room, and then mamma came to the window and called us in.

There were one or two friends to dinner besides Lord Carlyon, and it was a very merry party that gathered round the great table that night.

Papa and mamma were old-fashioned in their ideas, some people said. The silver on our table was real and massive, and had descended from generation to generation, but

papa said he preferred the old family plate, and would not buy new, and the delicate glass served only to brighten the table, making no showy glitter.

During dinner I noticed Persis, who was seated opposite me with Lord Carlyon, steal more than one furtive glance at my lover, who, however, appeared utterly unconscious of her scrutiny. Persis possessed great command over her features when she chose, and I could not guess from her expression what were her thoughts.

"Frank looks rather sulky," said mamma. Denzil being the honoured guest was sitting next her, and he looked across with an amorous smile. I remember now the look that came into Lord Carlyon's eyes as they met Denzil's. It was a strange mixture of sorrow and dislike. What had my lover done?

At length mamma rose and inclined her stately head, and the ladies followed her out of the room. Persis went at once to the piano when we entered the drawing-room, and commenced to sing. She had a pure, sweet contralto, and was passionately fond of music. The sound of her voice must have penetrated to the dining-room, for the gentlemen soon came in one after the other, Denzil and Lord Carlyon being last.

Persis was singing one of the songs from the *Bohemian Girl*, and as they entered her voice rang out with so much passion and pathos that I was startled.

"Some thoughts, perchance, 'twere best to quell,
Some impulse to forget,
On which could memory cease to dwell,
We may be happy yet!"

Denzil started and turned pale, and instead of coming to my side, as was evidently his intention on entering, he crossed the room to where Persis sat, saying something in a low voice as he seated himself at her side. I saw her glance up, then flush, my beautiful, proud sister, as her eyes drooped beneath his gaze. What could he have said to have caused that flush?

I do not think Denzil would wilfully have caused me pain, but no pen can tell the keen anguish I suffered as I watched those two sitting, laughing and talking so carelessly at the piano. Oh, heaven! Some party has spoken of the pain of too much loving. I wondered if I gave him a love that was beyond that which was right. I only know that I felt as though my heart was dead, and life held no more joy for me. How could I live my life if he proved false?

Lord Carlyon, seeing that Denzil meant to remain at my sister's side, came over to where I was standing, and commenced talking in his easy, pleasant way.

I was very fond of Lord Carlyon. We had been friends from childhood, and the time was not far distant when he called me Gundred, and I addressed him as Frank; but we were separated for a few years, he to go to college and to boarding school, and somehow when we met again I could not feel that the tall, handsome fellow with the drooping blonde moustache was the boy I used to play and quarrel with. Still, we were good friends as ever, and the dearest wish of my heart was to see him married to my sister Persis—my lovely, innocent sister—for I knew that he loved her truly, and would make her happy.

"Mrs. Sherbourne has promised to come over to Gaer Wood Tower and spend the day next Friday," he observed, presently. "You have not been there since the new wing was built, have you?"

"No," I replied, absently. I was thinking of Denzil's strange behaviour, for he was still at the farther end of the long room, never having glanced once in my direction; but I, too, was proud, and rousing myself I conversed with my childhood's friend as gaily as if no painful thoughts were haunting me.

How the evening passed away I do not remember. I only know that several of the lady guests sang while the elders played慈悲; and Lord Carlyon and I sat on in the

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shadow of the lace-curtained window that looked on to the green lawn, gazing out as we talked at the starlit sky and the smooth river, in whose depths the tall swaying trees were reflected.

Once, when some one came across and asked me to sing, Denzil's eyes met mine, and to my surprise they were full of reproach, but my pride was hurt at his evident neglect, and, turning to Lord Carlyon, I replied that I did not feel well enough to sing.

"Shall we go out and listen to the nightingales?" said Frank, presently, and I rose in silence and passed out on to the lawn. In silence we walked down the broad pathways, where the trees to the right of us were grouped in gigantic masses, and nothing save the trill of the nightingale broke the stillness.

We were neither in the mood for speech. Each was busy with our own gloomy thoughts, and a dread suspicion that Denzil was not quite the immaculate hero I had pictured him had entered my mind.

The burden of Frank's thoughts I could not guess. We wandered on down the chequered walk, past the old trunk where Denzil had found me in the early part of the evening, through the rose-garden, and so back to the house without having uttered a word; and then, as Lord Carlyon put out his hand to adjust the lace shawl that had fallen from my shoulders, Denzil came out, standing still as he observed us in the glare of the gas-light that shone far down the lawn in a ghostly, misty haze.

His face was deathly pale, I saw, as we joined him, and he turned to me half-inquisitively —

"You have had a pleasant stroll?"

"I have," I replied, calmly; and then, without waiting for him to speak another word, I stepped through the window into the brilliantly-lighted room, Denzil following silently.

Mamma saw us enter, and came across to us.

"My dear Gundred," she said, "you look tired out, does she not, Denzil? I think it is time we broke up."

Denzil turned and looked steadily at me for a moment.

"She does, indeed; but you see she has had a most exciting day," he answered, and I fancied that there was a sneer in his musical voice.

"I am really not one bit tired," I protested, but mamma was obdurate.

As we passed out of the room Denzil laid his hand on my arm and said in a hurried whisper —

"Gundred, remember your promise to be in the garden at seven to tomorrow."

"I will keep my promise," I began, coldly, but as our eyes met the anger died out of my heart.

There was such a world of eager yearning in those tender brown eyes, and I pressed the hand he held out to my breast. The light that flashed over his dear face made my whole being thrill, and I went to bed with a light heart.

"Good-night dear; I will not keep you," said Persis, as we stood alone in her room.

There were dark rings round her eyes I noticed, and her clear olive cheeks were blanched as with pain.

"Are you ill, dear?" I cried, in sudden alarm.

"No, Gundred, only tired," she replied, and she smiled that sweet slow smile that gained for her so many lovers.

I was heartily ashamed of myself by this time, and could have fallen down as she stood before me in her proud loveliness and begged her forgiveness for my unjust suspicions, but I did not; I only put my arms round her neck and kissed her twice, then hastened to my own apartment.

The next morning I was awakened by the sweet carolling of birds in the trees that shaded my room, and, running to the window, threw it open, letting in a flood of rich amber sunshine.

The sky was tinged still with the glow of sunrise, and that brooding calm rested over the whole country that is only felt in the early dawn.

I dressed myself quickly, and hastened out into the garden, singing gaily as the tiny birds above my head. I wandered on slowly, and was in no hurry to reach the rose garden where I had promised to meet Denzil.

I felt shy of meeting him after the events of the previous evening; besides, in the clear light of day, away from his presence, I could reason better, and it did seem to me that his conduct had been strange.

"So you have come, ma belle?" said a voice at my elbow.

I had no need to look up, for that voice was only too familiar, too dear, it seemed. I knew my voice sounded constrained, for he took my hand and sought to meet my gaze as I replied —

"Of course I have! I promised, and I always take a walk before breakfast."

"Gundred, why did you behave so cruelly last evening?" he asked, abruptly.

"I?" I cried, in astonishment.

"Yes, you, Gundred! You seated yourself away from every one else with Lord Carlyon, and so left Persis by herself. Of course, what could I do but stay with her. And then, just when I was coming to you, I found you had gone for a walk with Frank in the grounds."

"Denzil, how can you be so mean as to stoop to falsehood to excuse yourself!" I cried, passionately, stung to bitter anger by his words. "You went straight to my sister's side, and did not attempt to leave it. You know that Frank was only waiting his opportunity to speak to her!"

He flushed, then grew pale at my words, and I could see that something had occurred to upset him—something beyond our quarrel—for his hands trembled, and I saw his under lip quiver.

"And are you going to quarrel with me for this trifling offence?" he asked, gently, and then I lifted my eyes to his.

I could not resist the look I saw there. I suppose it was weak, stupidly so; but to feel him near me, to have his arm round me, was joy inexpressible; and as I laid my head on his breast, I sighed the last feeling of resentment away.

We walked on slowly under the shade of the old limes, and the morning breeze wafted their sweet perfume to me as the branches bent and quivered, and the sun danced in bright golden spots on the green leaves and cast queer crooked shadows on the smooth grass.

It was a lovely peaceful morning—a morning for love and hope; and I gave myself up to the pleasures of the present hour, listening in shy wonder to the soft, sweet words my lover whispered under the shadow of the old limes.

Presently, as we sauntered along, now by the laughing merry river, we saw the form of a woman emerge from behind a thick cluster of elder bushes, and, as she advanced towards us, I saw that it was Persis.

She looked, indeed, a beautiful, queenly creature in her simple morning robe of pale-t pink cambric and filmy lace, and I sighed to think I had not been gifted with her glowing southern loveliness.

"Good morning, Denzil," she cried, coming quickly across the grass to meet us. "Why, I thought you would be in bed, asleep."

A swift pleased smile came to my lover's face as she joined us, but I was not in the mood to be jealous; and so, looking on the fair picture she made, with that rare sweet smile dimpling round her curved scarlet lips, I excused him and turned to her with some laughing reply.

She raised her left hand as we three walked on over the soft yielding grass, and a ray of golden sunlight fell across and glittered in a thousand exquisite lights upon a costly diamond ring, which she wore on the third finger of her left hand.

"Where did you get that ring, Persis?" I

asked, in surprise, for I had never seen it before, and I thought I knew of every present she had received during her life.

"Oh, that was given to me at school," she replied, but a flush rose to her face and her manner seemed confused.

I wondered a little over this, but I soon forgot it in listening to the pleasant conversation of my lover, for he could talk well, gliding from one subject to another, and, with consummate ease and skill, leading the imagination whithersoever he listed.

Not till the breakfast bell sounded did we turn our footsteps towards the house, and then we did not hurry, but loitered on the way to pluck a rose here, a pale blossom there, or a delicate feathered fern frond, as it reared its head to the blue sky above our heads.

After breakfast, Denzil proposed taking us out for a row on the river, and, of course, this met with our approval; so the days passed away, the first happy, peaceful, joyous days of my lover's return.

"Oh, my love, my love, how I loved you!"

CHAPTER II.

AT GAER WOOD TOWER.

The day arrived, the all-important day on which we girls were to go over to Lord Carlyon's estate. It was a glorious day, and my heart kept time with the gay notes of the birds that were singing in the old trees that shadowed the room in which I slept. Denzil, my king, would be with me! I cast every feeling of doubt and fear from me on this warm, beautiful morning, and gave myself up to delicious dreamings, of which he, of course, was the head and centre.

"Gundred, your thoughts must be very pleasant ones, to judge from your face," said a voice at my elbow, and Persis put her lovely arms round my neck. "Were you thinking of Denzil? How lucky you are to have won the love of such a man." This last was accompanied with a sigh.

"Am I worthy, Sis?" I asked, a rush of remorse paling my cheek, as I remembered my petty jealousy.

"Worthy? Yes, but do you appreciate him? You are so cold, so indifferent," she replied, almost impatiently.

"Ah, Sis, if you could have read my heart, have felt its wild beatings, the joy that was akin to pain that came over me when in his presence, you would not then have termed me cold."

I believe that with all my outward indifference and coldness of manner my nature was as passionate as hers, but she was all on the surface, quick tempered, forgiving, a creature of impulses, while I was slow in my likes and dislikes, and never acted without first thinking out the consequences.

"Not indifferent, sister. I do not show my feelings so plainly as you," I said. "But come. I hear mamma's footsteps. We shall be late," and with these words I turned away and left the room, followed by Persis.

Mamma and papa were standing at the hall door, which was thrown wide open, giving a cool, inviting view of the long shady lime avenue, and the clear, smooth river, with its drooping willows and bushy undergrowth. The carriage was waiting, and in a few moments we were bowling swiftly down the avenue, chatting gaily. Mamma always entered into our enjoyment, and to-day she seemed joyous beyond measure, laughing as merrily as a young girl over my sister's witty little speeches, chiding softly when she compared Lord Carlyon's boyish handsomeness with the more matured beauty of Denzil's manly face. I think she hoped that that day would settle the future for Persis—and so it did!

Gaer Wood Tower was about five miles from our place, and the drive was one of the most enjoyable I had ever had; every moment brought me nearer the one who was above all others to me. "We arrived there exactly at the

appointed time, the great clock in the centre tower was just booming forth twelve, as the massive gates swung back to give ingress to our carriage.

I could see Denzil standing on the wide terrace that faced the lawn, and I felt as though I could not sit quietly there. I longed to get out to meet him, but I conquered the feeling. What would those around me say to such a proceeding, and we should meet in a few moments, after all?

The tender light that had leaped to Denzil's eyes as he assisted me out of the carriage had not vanished when he turned to greet Persis, and I saw Frank's face flush, and he looked quickly at them as they stood together in the warm sunlight, while a haughty, almost fierce expression swept over his boyish features. That look came back to me in the after time of dread and crime with vivid distinctness, came back and haunted me, bringing with it confirmation of the doubts and fears I would fain have crushed.

Lady Carlyon was a thorough aristocrat in her appearance and manner; there was that gracious sweetness in her smile and quick ring of sincerity in her well-modulated voice as she greeted us that bespoke her gentle birth; and I thought then, as I had often thought before, "No wonder your son is so perfect a gentleman in his behaviour to women!"

"I was so afraid you would not come early," she observed when the greetings were over. "You see I remember my own young days, and girls like to have some little time to think over their toilette," and she smiled a sweet smile that had in it a tinge of sadness, which made me fancy she was thinking of her dead husband.

We passed into the house as we conversed, and a glow of pride thrilled me as I thought that my sister would be mistress of this grand old home, with its exquisite carvings and long corridors, where hung the portraits of generation after generation of the Carlyons.

The sunlight glinted in through the long windows, and threw up the rich paintings of the lofty ceiling, and shone on the rare sculptured figures that filled every niche of the corridor which we were traversing.

I could see the western side of Gaer Wood Park through the farthest windows—a rich expanse of undulating wooded land, with a glimpse between the swaying trees of a river, the same that wound its way through our grounds.

Lady Carlyon carried mamma off to her boudoir to have a quiet chat after a time, and then Lord Carlyon proposed a stroll in the garden.

We went out into the warm air, out into the garden, where the birds twittered so gaily, and gaudy butterflies circled and danced over the swaying bushes, and soft, velvet-bodied bees hummed drowsily from flower to flower; on beneath the cool shade of fruit trees, heavy with fragrant fruits, until we reached a narrow path beside a high hedge which led from the countrified town to a village about a mile off.

This path had been made a right-of-way, and so I felt no surprise when a strongly-built, tall young fellow came bounding over a stile, whistling softly to himself.

He was slightly taller than Denzil and about the same age, and there was a certain nameless something about him that struck me as being familiar.

He turned with a half-careless indifference and gazed at us; then, as his eyes rested, first on my lover, then on Persis, he started and paused, but only for a moment; the next he was walking away with an easy swinging step, whistling as before.

"That young fellow had a handsome face; but were he a relation of mine I could wish there was less recklessness in the expression," observed Lord Carlyon.

"It is a face that I shall remember," I replied, quietly.

Somewhat there seemed to have fallen a shadow over us with the advent of that care-

less, reckless-faced stranger, and by mutual though silent consent we turned and retraced our steps.

"Persis, you are singularly silent," remarked Denzil, putting his hand on her shoulder.

"Was it my fancy, I wondered, that his voice sounded strange?"

"Oh, I am thinking," she said, with a laugh.

The unreal sound of that laugh made me turn my eyes from the fair landscape to her face.

It was pale as a white rose, and the firm lips were set tightly together, as though she were in pain. What had brought that look of repressed misery to the young, innocent face?

"Dearest!" I cried, "what is it? Tell me!"

"Why, Gundred," she said, gazing calmly at me with those great luminous eyes, "I did not know you were given to heroics."

Lord Carlyon looked from one to the other, and with his usual ready tact he changed the subject by making some remark about the way in which the new gardener had laid out the "Lady's Bower," a name given to one of the prettiest spots on the whole estate.

I answered his questions in my usual tones, and we were apparently in the same spirits when we once more entered Gaer Wood Tower as when we passed out of it one short hour before; but some instinct told me that a new element had come into our lives, and even then the shadow of the dread tragedy of my life seemed to hover over me, for I shivered in the warm sunlight.

Mamma and papa were in excellent spirits, and kept up a constant flow of bright, pleasant conversation during luncheon. I could not feel dull in such company, and the other three joined heartily in the enjoyment of the hour.

Persis, indeed, seemed to have entirely forgotten her indisposition, or whatever it was, for she laughed and talked, giving us little sketches of her adventures at school, and otherwise rendering herself quite an acquisition to the party.

"I always thought you a charming child, Persis, and you have more than fulfilled the promise of your childhood," said Lady Carlyon that night, as we stood on the steps in the clear starlight, bidding them good-bye.

"Good night, Persis," I heard Lord Carlyon whisper. "I shall come over to the Limes to-morrow, when I shall have a question to ask you."

A rich glow, like the glow of a damask rose, flushed over her lovely face, and I saw in the starlight her proud, dark head droop and the large eyes fall beneath his gaze. Had she learned to love him already? It would seem so; but, then, Persis was ever quick to love, and quick to hate.

Early next day Lord Carlyon rode over. There was a flush of excitement on his handsome boyish face, and his blue eyes were aglow with the unmistakable light of love.

We were in the breakfast-room talking over our plans for a ball which was to be given at the end of the ensuing week, and presently he drew Persis out of the room, making some careless remark about wishing to see some rare ferns that had been sent us by a friend.

It was past the usual luncheon hour when they returned, and I could see by the happy light on their young faces that the question he had asked had been answered satisfactorily. I do not know why, but as I looked at them sitting before me at the flower-laden table the face of that young fellow, with its reckless, dare-devil expression, came between me and them, and again that unaccountable shiver passed over me.

When Lord Carlyon had taken his leave, which he did soon after luncheon was over, Persis called me to her side.

"Gundred, will you come for a walk with me?" she asked, and there was a ring of shyness in her clear, full-toned voice.

"Of course I will, dear," I replied, quickly.

She did not speak for some little time, not until we had reached the river, and were standing under the shade of the willows, and I waited for her to break the silence.

"Gundred, he loves me, and has asked me to be his wife!"

How the rich voice quivered and sank as she spoke those words, and the lovely innocent face flushed into greater beauty under the influence of this love that had come into her life. Her large eyes were black with emotion, and the colour came and went on her pale cheeks with each word she uttered.

"And you, Persis?" I whispered, bending over her. She was kneeling in the long grass at my feet, and the soft rhythmical murmur of the river mingled itself with her low tremulous tones as she murmured her reply.

"I have promised, for I love him! Oh, Gundred, if anything should happen to part us, I should die!"

"Persis, how silly of you to talk like that," I cried, gazing in astonishment at her, for she had risen and stood before me now with wild, frightened eyes and outstretched hands.

"I know it is more than silly, it is vain! But, oh! you do not know how I love him—how the mere thought of separation drives me mad."

"But why think of it—why let your mind dwell upon impossibilities?" I interrupted, a little impatiently, for this seemed more like the heroes of a school-girl than the conversation of a woman.

"Ah, Dreda, who can see into the future? What is the song says,—

"What is coming who can say? We can not tell, and I feel that such a love as mine never can come to a happy ending; it would be too bright, too beautiful for this world."

"You are growing terribly sentimental, Persis."

I laughed as I spoke, and laid my hand on her shoulder. My innocent sister, how sympathetic she must think me.

"Gundred, you do not know," she said sadly.

"Well, Persis," I said, "I am glad you return his love, for I am sure he will be a good and true husband"—then she bent her dark-stately head and kissed me.

"Thank you, Gundred; your words and quiet calm voice seem to have a soothing effect upon me, dear," she said, her eyes wandering dreamily away to where the river turned, and was lost to view behind a mass of trees and underwood.

"It seems a pity to spoil the first day of your betrothal by indulging in gloomy forebodings. When is he going to tell papa?"

"To-morrow, Gundred. Would you love me just the same if you found that I was not the innocent girl you now think me?" she said, and there was a queer little catch in her voice.

"My dear, Persis, I really think you must be ill, or your mind wandering," I replied; but I felt uneasy, although I smiled, for her words seemed to have a hidden meaning in them.

"You must not take any notice of what I say," she returned, and then we maintained complete silence until we reached the grounds immediately surrounding our dear old home. "Do not mention a word to mamma until to-morrow, after Frank has spoken to papa. I do not feel equal to congratulations to-day," she observed hurriedly, as we entered the house.

She was a strange girl, I thought to myself that night, as I leisurely disrobed. What was the meaning of her wild talk—her peculiar manner? There was no doubt that she loved Frank, I felt; and something told me that in her great love for him lay the cause of her trouble.

Why was it that the cruel grey eyes and nonchalantly wicked face of that young fellow we had met in the fields at Gaer Wood Town flared before me like a living thing.

Lord Carlyon rode over again next day, and after being closeted with papa for quite an hour, they both came into the morning-room where we were sitting, or, rather, I should say mamma and I, for Persis had never been seen

a moment, but had wandered about the room, picking up a book, to throw it aside next moment, then rearranging the flowers in a large vase that stood on one of the many tiny tables that adorned the room.

She was standing there, with the sunlight filtering through the leaves of the trees outside on to her fair flushed face and perfect form when they entered, and I could see the quick heaving of her bosom and the nervous clutch of her delicate hands on the flower she held as papa's voice broke the stillness that had fallen upon us.

"Persis, my child," he said, taking her hand and drawing her towards mamma, "I have heard with pleasure, greater than I can express, that Lord Carlyon has chosen you for his wife. Kate, I know they have your good wishes."

Mamma rose from her seat with eyes aglow with pleasure, though there were tears in them, and her soft low voice trembled slightly as she stooped and kissed Persis, who had knelt down by the lounge.

"Dear Persis, I hope you will be happy; it will not be Frank's fault if you are not," she whispered, gently.

Frank alone was silent, but I knew how deep was his joy as I gazed into his pale, but handsome face. He found voice, however, presently to whisper something to his fiance, and when they passed out at the long French window I do not know which flushed the deeper red.

"I am glad, indeed, that she loves him. I have fancied sometimes that she was flirting only, but I was mistaken. By-the-by, have you any idea where she got that ring? I don't remember ever having seen it before?" said papa.

"No, papa! at least, I do not know the name of the giver. It was a present from a school-fellow, she says."

"Rather a costly gift for a school-girl. It looks a trifle old-fashioned, more like a family jewel than a new thing bought as a present," replied mamma.

"Oh, perhaps it is a ring belonging to some girl's great-grandmother," I laughed.

"Then she ought not to have accepted it. I should be greatly displeased with either of you girls if you were to give away any of our family jewels," said mamma, as she turned and left the apartment, leaving me alone.

I sat pondering over the events of the past few days, taking no heed of the bright beautiful morning, until Persis's voice aroused me.

"Frank said good-bye to me at the end of the Larch walk," she said, "and I want you to come out with me and discuss our dresses for the ball."

"But, you know, Denzil will be here in half-an-hour," I replied, and I felt the colour rise and fade in my face with every beat of my heart.

"Oh, never mind about him; leave word that he is to come to us down by the river, or by the lake, it is cooler there," she answered, and so I left word with mamma that he was to follow us.

We did not commence the dress discussion until we reached the borders of the lake. We stopped now and again to pluck some fair blossom that trailed across our path, or to listen in silent wonder to the soft, clear notes of some tiny feathered songster as it soared gaily up against the cloud-decked sky, or to watch the dragon-flies, with their lovely gauze wings, as they buzzed past our heads in the bright sunshine.

It was a lovely day, intensely hot, with a soft, balmy, flower-scented breeze that breathed gently over us like a whisper from Heaven. The trees scarcely moved in the soft air, and the golden and white lilies, with their broad, dark shining leaves, lay perfectly motionless in their still, silver bed.

Seating ourselves underneath a great oak we leant back, and gazed dreamily at the fair scene before us. The lake on the opposite side was bordered with laburnums, and their branches bent gracefully towards the water's-edge, making a natural arch. The delicate

bloom was just fading; beyond were undulating fields, in all their rich emerald greenness, and over all the sun shone down in a warm, golden flood.

"Gundred, I am going to wear deep rose, pink, and pearls," remarked Persis, breaking the silence that I had wished could last.

"I think I will wear blue, pale blue, and diamond and turquoise ornaments," I replied, rather absently, for my mind was not on dress. I was wondering how soon my lover would come, and even as I wondered he came along the pathway to our right.

The blood surged to my face, and my hands trembled, and I could scarcely speak; but I felt that my love spoke from my eyes, for he smiled a quick, bright smile of pleasure, and caught me to him, pressing a kiss, fervent as any he had given me on the first day of his return, upon my willing lips. The birds caroled forth a gladsome song, and the tall rushes that grew up out of the water near the lilies bent and whispered softly to the golden and white flowers, and the rustle of the leaves overhead sounded like a faint fairy-like melody.

"My darling, you are pleased to see me?" he said, as we strolled away, leaving Persis deep in a book she had brought with her. "I can see you are, your eyes tell me some sweet tales at times, my love," he continued, and in my greatest joy I had no words wherewith to reply.

We wandered on by the margin of the still, clear lake, he whispering the old, old story, and I listening in a sweet, soul-felt silence. [I thought of Burn's lines,—

"The birds sang love on every spray,
as I heard them singing so gaily, for surely it must have been love that rendered their notes so thrillingly sweet and soft.

"Have you heard of the engagement between Persis and Lord Carlyon?" I asked, presently, as we sauntered back to the spot where we had left my sister.

"No, I have not," replied Denzil, "but I am exceedingly pleased to hear of it now."

"It has always been mamma's wish and hope, so the course of their true love bids fair to run in smooth places, does it not, Denzil?" I said, and as I spoke that silver as of impending evil came over me, and then a horrible thought came to me. Supposing, while I was fancying evil and sorrow for my lovely, innocent sister, these warnings and presentiments were meant for myself? "Oh, Denzil, my love!" I cried, clinging to his arm, "nothing can ever come between us!"

He started and paled at the piteous entreaty in my tones, and his voice was not steady, as he replied, taking my face, from which I knew the blood had receded, leaving me pale as death, between his hands,—

"Nothing but death can come between us, unless you are faithless!"

There was a solemnity in his tone, and a grave earnestness in his face and manner that ought to have carried conviction with it, and, in the after time, have helped to keep down the jealous doubts and fears that racked my brain; but to err is human, and though at that moment I was reassured, I—but let my story tell how his love was repaid.

"You think me very stupid, I am afraid, Denzil," I observed, as we came in sight of Persis, who was lying on the long grass, one arm thrown above her dark head, with its crown of glossy black hair, the rich, red lips slightly apart, and the long lashes resting on the flushed cheeks, forming a perfect picture of ease and indolence—a picture of wondrous beauty.

Denzil did not make any reply to my remark, but pressed my hand as he smiled down into my upturned face.

"So, Persis, I hear that you are an engaged young lady," he said, with a smile, as he threw himself down on the soft grass.

Persis looked up from her book with a bright, pretty blush.

"Yes, Denzil; I thought that Gundred looked so happy over it that perhaps I might

venture," she answered, trying to hide her shy confusion beneath her saucy words.

"But do you love him, Persis?" asked Denzil, gravely. "Never give yourself to so base and paltry a thing as a loveless marriage—a marriage for a mere title."

"Denzil!"

Only that one word, but we could both detect the ring of wounded feeling in the cry, and then she threw her arms round me and sobbed.

"Forgive me, Persis," said my lover, gently; "but I fancied from your words, which you will own were a trifle flippant, that you cared only for his title—that the offer had dazzled you."

"That could never be, for I think we Sherbornes are as good as the Carlys every bit, and I could not marry a man I did not love. Ah! Denzil, I do love him!" she said, raising her face, all flushed and tear-stained, from my shoulder.

"I believe you, my pretty sister, and I think he is worthy all the love you can bestow upon him," he returned. "Is this your engagement ring?" he added, taking her left hand in his, and turning it round; but as his eyes fell upon it, flashing and sparkling in the sun, he started, and rose to his feet with a slight exclamation of dismay. Persis rose also, and they stood there, those two—my lover and my sister, both with pale, startled faces, and wide, startled eyes.

"You are not well, Denzil," said Persis, recovering her equanimity in a moment.

"Where did you get that ring, Persis?" he cried, and his voice was hoarse and strained. "Tell me, where did you get it?"

"This ring!" she said, glancing carelessly at it, and holding out her hand so that a ray of sunlight fell athwart it. "It is a gift from a school-fellow. Why do you wish to know?"

"Oh! I do not know; it reminded me of one similar to it, which a dear friend used to wear," replied Denzil, in an indifferent tone; but an instinct told me that there was a weightier reason than the one he had given for his strange agitation at sight of the innocent bauble, and the calm beauty of the day lost half its charm in the rush of conflicting thoughts that came over me as we three walked slowly back to the house.

CHAPTER III.

IN THE LIME WALK.

It had been raining heavily all the morning, and, by the look of the sky, I guessed that there was plenty more to come down. I had ensconced myself comfortably in a roomy armchair, and commenced to read, when Persis, who never could amuse herself, came into the room with a slightly discontented frown on her fair brow which detracted somewhat from the natural beauty of her face.

"Gundred, whatever shall we do with ourselves to-day if it goes on raining like this?" she said, coming to my side and taking the book out of my hand.

"Do with ourselves?" I echoed, with a smile. "Why, cannot you do some fancy work, Sis, or read?"

"Fancy work!" she exclaimed scornfully. "I hate it, and as for reading I never could understand how anyone could sit hour after hour poring over the loves and trials of imaginary people, no matter how well it might be written."

"You lose a great pleasure when you give up reading, and you are not bound to read love tales," I replied seriously, and taking no heed of her impatient movement. "There are books of travel, books of science—"

"I tell you, Dreda, I detest reading!"

"Then what is it you want, Persis? Why not practice that new cantata that Frank brought over yesterday?"

"I do not feel inclined for music."

"Well, what do you wish to do. I am ready?"

Laying aside the book which she had handed

me back I rose and stood beside her, waiting to hear how she would propose to while away the hours before dinner, when Denzil and Lord Carlyon would be with us.

"Come up to your room and show me your new jewels," she said coaxingly, and so we waded our way up to my own apartments.

I could not help being amused at her innocent delight as I placed the costly gems I had received from time to time before her.

"Let us go down to my room," she urged. "My glass is in a better position than yours," and so to humour her I consented.

"This is pretty," I remarked, holding up a handsome diamond necklace. "It is one of Denzil's gifts."

"Fasten it round my neck," said Persis, putting up her left hand to hold it while I did so.

"Why, Sis," I cried, "the setting is the same as that ring of yours. Look at this peculiar scroll round the edge?"

She turned white, and her lips drooped as I spoke; then, with a hasty gesture, she tore the ring from her slender white finger.

"I will never wear it again!" she cried, passionately. "It has brought me nothing but misery. I suppose it is a just punishment; but you," turning her great eyes reproachfully upon me, "you might leave me in peace."

"Persis," I exclaimed, lost in wonderment, "whatever is the matter with you lately?" and after that I could only sit there in my cosy blue velvet chair and stare helplessly before me out of the window, from which I could see the river and the lilies that had looked so fair and sweet a few days before beaten about by the heavy rain.

"You are the most inquisitive set of people it was ever my lot to see. Why, at school I did as I liked, wore what I liked, without absurd questions of 'Why, Persis, where did you get that?'" she went on, passionately, walking to and fro in the long room, nervously clasping and unclasping her white hands.

"Persis," I said, quietly, looking straight into her big brown eyes, which looked now almost black, "you are not vexed like this because I made that remark. There is some other and deeper meaning to your strange conduct, though what I cannot say."

I remember now the startled look she gave me, and how she paused in her walk, and stood before me with an expression on her face which told me that there were depths in my sister's character it were best should never be sounded, an expression I had never seen before, and never wished to see again, for it filled me with sorrow.

"You speak with such assurance, Gundred, it were a pity to spoil your little dream by contradiction," she said, haughtily.

"Persis," I cried out, impatiently; "your behaviour is strange beyond all speaking. Why this passion of heroics because we dare to ask you who gave you a ring, which is peculiar enough to attract anyone's notice? Is there any dread secret connected with it?"

"None," she returned, but her lips tightened as she uttered the one word, and she glared almost in hatred at it as it lay before her on the soft, thick, blue carpet. "I do not know even why I wore it. I have no affection for the giver; in fact, my feelings are more inclined to vague dislike," she added, with such an air of indifference that I believed her.

"It were a pity to lose it," I said, stooping to pick it up; and as I did so I saw Persis stood also and clutch eagerly at a tiny square of note-paper which lay at her feet, as though it had just fallen there. I did not make any remark, as I supposed it to be some poetic effusion of hers, for Persis was given to writing passionate love poems and dreamy bits about autumn and winter.

"You are going to open the ball with Denzil?" she said, taking no heed of my remark about the ring. "I have promised Frank the first dance."

"Of course," I replied, then I walked to the window and gazed out at the surrounding country, which, despite the rain, looked fair indeed. The long grass seemed to have gained

renewed life, and lay like a deep emerald carpet before my eyes. The bright rain-drops fell on to the tall flowers, sending a shower of diamonds over their pale leaves as they bent beneath the weight, and wafting their sweet subtle perfume to us as we stood there at the open window; the birds too, as they hopped from bough to bough, the rain spots on their dark wings not brighter than their saucy round black eyes, seemed to be so joyous, carolling forth such sweet snatches of song that my heart leaped in response.

"You look as though you were enjoying yourself," exclaimed my sister, impatiently.

"And so I am," I returned. "Just listen to the birds, and inhale the sweet smell of the pines, and then say there is no pleasure in a wet day. Does the air ever seem so fresh after a shower? And see how green and bright the earth is now!"

"I do not feel poetical to-day," laughed Persis. "I really think I must have an attack of dyspepsia. I feel so captious."

"Who is that down by the river?" I cried, as I caught sight of a tall, well-knit figure sauntering slowly along in the drizzling rain. "Why it is Denzil! How stupid of him to walk so slowly; he will get wet."

"No, it is not Denzil," said Persis, slowly, and looking at her I saw that she had grown deadly pale, and she drew back into the shadow of the curtain. "It is—it is the—"

"It is the stranger whom we met in Lord Carlyon's grounds," I interrupted. "But what is he doing here? Do you know that even now I can trace a certain likeness to Denzil in his carriage. How strange that he should come here? Has papa given permission, or is he unaware of the fact that he is trespassing?"

"Well, I am sure it cannot injure us for a stranger to walk in our grounds when we are not there, and in the rain, too. I pity his taste."

Persis turned away as she spoke, and walked to the door.

"Are you going down?" I said, and she merely nodded her dark head, and closed the door after her.

I stood there for a few minutes watching the mysterious stranger. He glanced once or twice at the house, and once I could have declared he raised his hand, as in token of recognition of some one; but that was fancy, of course.

He turned and retraced his steps after a time, and presently disappeared from view behind the trees that were so thick down by the river.

I walked away from the window towards a bookcase that stood facing the door of the dressing-room; the glass satin draped door was open, and, putting up my hand, I took a volume at random. I opened the leaves carelessly, but the words I saw written on the flyleaf caught my attention and held me spellbound—

"To PERSIS SHERBORNE,
In token of affection
From her lover,
GERALD BRANSBROOK."

Her lover! This, then, was the secret that Persis guarded so jealously. "Ooh! Persis, Persis, why could you not confide in me? Why not have told me before I discovered it like this?" was the cry that rose to my lips.

I laid the volume down, and with a fixed determination in my mind sought Persis. She was sitting, or rather reclining, in the roomy depths of a large velvet lounge, her feet daintily poised on a footstool, pretending to read, for her book was lying closed on her lap, and her eyes were fixed, with faraway expression in them, on the bushes outside the drawing-room window.

"Persis," I said, going up to her and kneeling beside the lounge so that I could see her face, "you never told me you had a lover at school."

"A lover at school!" she repeated, looking at me with big scared eyes as she rose to a sitting position, and pushed the heavy dark masses

of hair back from her brow with hands that trembled visibly.

"Yes," I said. "Who is this Gerald Bransbroke who gave you books and styled himself your 'lover' on the flyleaf?"

"Oh!" There was a sigh of relief in that tiny monosyllable.

"Well, Persis?" I said, inquiringly, as she continued silent.

"You want to hear about madame's nephew. He was a tiresome young monkey. I accepted his love just as I did his presents, because it served to pass away many a tedious hour. We used to have such fun in that quaint old garden at St. Cloud. I wish—" Then she paused, with an expression on her beautiful face which plainly told me those last words were a mistake.

"And that is all?" I asked, eagerly. "There was really no love on your part, my sister?"

"None," she answered, setting her teeth together firmly. "None, I assure you. If I ever think of him now it is with disgust," and I saw by the flush in her eyes and the deepened colour on her olive cheeks that her words were true.

Then my idea was only the wild idea of a suspicious brain. After all, why should she not have had a lover; it would be more wonderful if, possessing such wondrous beauty, she had no lover. Mamma's coming in then put an end alike to our conversation and my thoughts, and then we went up to our own rooms to dress for dinner.

That evening, to my surprise, we were all standing in the drawing-room after dinner, when Denzil drew Persis towards the open window, and when I would have followed, he turned to me with a grave, courteous smile, saying—

"I wish to speak to your sister alone, Gundred."

A burning flush rose to my very hair, a flush of wounded pride and love. He had neglected me sometimes, but never had I offered my company and been repulsed before, and I felt a choking sensation in my throat as I wondered if the others had witnessed that little scene.

It had long ceased raining, and the stars shone in silver radiance up in the clearly dark sky, so high above our heads, and the tall trees waved and rustled in the night breeze like the sound of distant seas. I could see Persis and my lover standing at the end of the terrace, she with upraised pallid face, he with grave earnest demeanour stooping over her as though pleading for some boon which she denied.

There was a look of determination on her lovely features, and the beautiful red mouth was closed, and wore a hard expression I did not care to see. She raised her white hands suddenly, with a quick, passionate gesture of refusal, and he turned impatiently away.

I could not bear it any longer, and going over to where mamma was sitting playing solitaire, I whispered to her that I did not feel well, and could not stay up, and then I crept up to my room, where I sat far into the night gazing with hot, tearless eyes at the deep dark sky, within thousands of wonderful lights twinkling and blinking in unsympathetic beauty.

It was the night of the ball, and Persis, who looked more radiantly beautiful than ever in her trailing-silk robes and gleaming jewels, was standing in the centre of the immense ball-room, talking and laughing with a circle of admirers. I could not help noticing her perfect song voice, and thought of my first ball, when I was almost too shy to answer even when addressed; but I could hear from where I stood with Denzil, in the deep shelter of a bay window, her rich full voice giving back jest for jest, quick bright sallies that caused those around her to laugh with true heartiness.

"Your sister is looking very lovely to-night," remarked Denzil, carelessly, lifting the soft lace curtain aside to gaze out at the moonlit landscape, but I saw his eyes glaze towards that merry group as he continued,

still in apparent indifference. "There will be some broken hearts to-morrow," and he laughed a little harshly, I thought.

"She is very beautiful," I replied, "but I hope she is not a coquette, as your words would imply."

"Indeed, Gundred, I did not wish you to take my words in that sense, though at the same time I fancy she is a coquette," returned Denzil, quietly.

"Well, if she is it is not your affair, unless you think she will try to break your heart," I said, sarcastically.

I felt ashamed when I saw the look of sad reproach in my lover's eyes.

Just then the band commenced some dreamy waltz, that had in its very strain an air of Eastern voluptuousness, and the surroundings—gaily attired, lovely women, tall, splendid men, sweet, fragrant exotics, and glittering lights—all tended to sooth my ruffled feelings, and a calm, intense joy came over me as I whirled round the room, clasped tightly in my lover's arms.

When the dance was finished Denzil led me to a seat, and then crossed over to where Persis stood, talking to Lord Callyon, who was looking very sulky indeed, and not attempting in the least degree to entertain his partner.

"You promised me the next dance," I heard Denzil say, in his grave voice, and Frank looked round with a haughty flush on his handsome, debonair face.

"Of course I did, Frank; you must have the next," she returned, easily, but Denzil bowed, as he replied quietly,—

"If you have forgotten, and given it to Frank, I can wait until you can give me one without offence to any one," and he smiled and half turned away.

"Pardon me, Eisdale, I would not have Persis guilty of such a rudeness for the world, and I daresay it will prove as pleasant to her," said Frank, in a bitter undertone, as he walked away to the farther end of the room, where he stood leaning against a marble pillar, festooned with bright, odorous flowers and dark foliage, watching the dancers, a dark, angry expression resting on his brow.

I could see him well as I gaily went through the maze of the "Lancers," and I felt a painful choked sensation in my throat as I watched the angry expression change to one of positive sorrow; and following the direction of his eyes I saw Persis and my lover pass out of the hall-room, and down the long wide corridor that led to the conservatory.

"A kindred feeling makes me wondrous kind," and I longed to speak to him, to comfort him if I could; and making some excuse to my partner I crossed to where he stood, and placing my hand on his arm—I felt no reserve with him, my almost brother—asked him to take me to the conservatory.

We paced slowly down the brightly-lit corridor, with its exquisite painted panels and priceless statues, and entered the conservatory in silence. There was a dreamy unreality here; the soft musical clash of many fountains fell pleasantly on the ear, and the air was filled with rare sweet perfume, intoxicating the senses and sending a dreamy languor through one's whole being. He paused beside a giant fern, whose long graceful fronds bent far out over the marble pavement, and putting his hands on my shoulders, gazed earnestly into my face.

"Do you fail to see it?" he asked, almost angrily, "or is it the natural sham, the mask-wearing of a woman?"

"Frank!" I cried, "what do you mean? What is there for me to see? Do you mean Persis? She is so young and her beauty attracts attention; can you blame her if her head is a little turned? She is not naturally a coquette."

My pleading words were spoken from my heart. It was really only the natural love of admiration which all beautiful women feel. Why should we expect her to be different from

the rest? I ignored even to myself the too evident fact that she was now walking in the grounds with my lover, leaving her lover to his own devices.

"You plead well and plausibly, Gundred," replied Frank; "but I am not alluding to her coquettices, and you must know that, if you are not blind."

"I am afraid, Frank, you have left your usual chivalry at home," I made answer. "But what, then, do you complain of?"

I was determined that no word or look of mine should condemn my sister, whom even now I felt was innocent of all blame. If there was guilt it was Denzil's, not hers.

"Why, that Denzil Eisdale, whom I have always taken to be the very soul of honour, is making love to one sister while he is engaged to the other!" he cried, passionately, clutching his hands till I thought the knuckles would come through the delicate skin.

I started back in horror at his words, though they only put into shape the jealous doubts and fears that had been haunting me of late; but it seemed so mean, so despicable a thing to imagine a man guilty of that my soul shrank from the thought.

"Oh, it could not be, it cannot be!" I moaned, half-aloud. "Denzil, my love, my life, whom I have thought pure and noble above all men—it surely cannot be!"

"Come out into the open air, Gundred," muttered Frank, taking me gently by the arm, and drawing my shawl closer round my shoulders. "This place stifles me."

We walked about the grounds for some time in moody silence; then by a strange accident we turned our steps in the direction of the Lime Avenue.

As we neared the centre where to the left, beneath a great lime, a seat had been erected, with a fanlight, pagoda-like roof, and supported by slender pillars, that were now overrun with some creeping plant—a passion flower I think it was—we saw that the seat was occupied by two persons, and by the light of the moon I could just see that the woman was Persis.

It was no difficult matter to decide who her companion was, for had not she and Denzil left the house together? Besides, Denzil's proud erect carriage was unmistakable.

"Denzil and Persis," I murmured.

"Look there; what is the meaning of that pretty scene?" cried Frank, pointing to them, and taking no heed of my words.

"I have been cruelly deceived," I whispered. "But Frank," I added, rallying all my generosity and faith, "are we not judging them hastily. Is it utterly impossible for them to come for a little stroll without harm being made of it? You and I are here together, and we hold the same position towards each other. Do we not Frank?"

"Gundred, you are a true-hearted, brave little woman," he returned taking my hand; "but see, you and I do not indulge in passionate embraces such as that I think," he added, with grim sternness.

The two had left the pretty Lime Walk seat, and it was as they reached the open that the man caught Persis to him and held her there close to his heart for a few seconds, and then they walked away, and were soon lost to view in the gloom of the shadow-giving limes.

"Oh, Heaven, my love, my lost love!" I moaned, staggering forward, and then the earth became suddenly dark.

I remember that as I fell I glanced upward, where the moon shone so serenely in her blue, star-gemmed home. I could see the stars twinkling through the quivering leaves as they swayed softly in the night air, and a bright silver ray of moonlight fell across Frank's face as he stooped forward with outstretched hands.

When I came to I was lying on the lounge in the conservatory with mamma leaning over me, her dear face white with anxiety, and Frank stood beside her, his face no less white, his eyes dark and sombre-looking in their pain, his mouth set hard.

The whole expression of the bright, care-

less, debonair face was altered. No one could complain of the want of manliness now. I would have given worlds to have banished that look, but I knew that nothing in this world ever could seem the same to him again if Persis were false. His love was great as mine, and my life was ended with the breaking of my love dream.

"Are you better, my child? It was the heat of the ball-room," said mamma, pressing a kiss on my cheek. "You have been over fatiguing yourself."

I glanced gratefully at Frank. He had led mamma to believe that I had only just left the dancers. He returned my look with such a grave, sad smile.

"You can leave her with me now in perfect safety, Mrs. Sherbourne," he said, and so mamma, who was really required as hostess left us, turning back to say,—

"Have you seen Denzil and Persis? I thought they were in here."

"No," replied Frank, mechanically, uttering a deliberate falsehood.

We neither of us spoke when we were alone, but sat there with eyes that saw not, not staring at the frothing waters of a fountain that stood near, and just as Frank was about to break the silence we heard a light, happy ripple of laughter, and the next moment Denzil and Persis entered by the window. Denzil glanced sharply at me, and then I suppose he saw I was not well, for he came across to my side, and took my hot hand in his own. "Tired?" he whispered, lowering his voice to that soft tone that was so dangerously sweet, and even though I felt that he was acting a part, my heart beat quicker and my pulses leaped, so weak is woman where the loves with such intensity as I did.

"Yes," I replied; then raising my eyes to his face, I added, "Did you and Persis enjoy your walk in the lime avenue?"

He turned deathly white, and catching at the head of the lounge with one hand, put the other quickly to his heart. I was startled at that grey pallor, but it served only to confirm my doubts. And then his voice—all the sweetness and music had gone from it, and when he spoke it sounded stern, almost harsh.

"Gundred!" he cried, catching my hand, "I swear by all that is true and pure on earth, by the love I bear you, Persis and I have not been together this evening. We met at this end of the lime avenue, near the house."

Persis was standing before me with a face so full of bitter sorrow that I was puzzled, but still we had stern facts to go upon, and rising from the lounge I answered my lover's words. "Oh! Denzil! Denzil! Why did you not trust me?"

"I can scarcely disbelieve the evidence of my own eyes!" I replied, scornfully, standing before them with flashing eyes.

I could scarcely speak, for my breath came in short, quick gasps that stirred the jewels on my bosom.

"You can believe whatever you please, *ma sour!*" cried Persis, in her usual ringing tones; and just then the music in the great ballroom ceased, and a few moments after laughing merry voices sounded down the long corridors, and this put an end to our discussion.

We did not again speak to each other that night, and when the guests had departed, and Persis and I stood alone in the deserted ballroom amid a dreary scene of faded flowers, torn gloves and ribbons, with the garish light of day struggling through the chinks of the venetian blinds, she looked so wan and miserable that I could not find it in my heart to upbraid her then. So we said good-night there, and sought our own apartments.

I felt tired, fatigued, but not sleepy, and so, instead of at once seeking my couch, I took off my dress and jewels, replacing them by a pale blue robe de chambre, then throwing the window open, I knelt on the deep window-seat and gazed out at the slowly waking earth.

The sun was just beginning to rise, and a faint pink glow showed in the sky above the tall pines in the wood beyond the river; the

birds had just awakened, and were bidding each other good-morning in perky, piping twitterings as they fluttered to and fro in the beautiful old trees.

A drowsy hum of insect life was in the air too, and gradually the sun rose over the pine-wood, changing the dull grey of the morning sky to a deep gold, that faded and blended imperceptibly with the rich crimson light that sank low behind the dark mass of trees, and as gradually a feeling of peace stole into my heart then I rose, shutting out the glorious picture with the heavy silken curtains, I sought my couch.

CHAPTER IV.

A SISTER'S TREACHERY.

"Persis, what explanation have you to give me?"

My voice was hard, cold, unyielding as was my heart. How else could I feel towards this too much worshipped sister, who had repaid my love and trust with such cruel treachery—treachery of the worst kind; for I knew that she loved Frank, and that she was merely playing with my lover's feelings, trying to win him from me for the mere love of coquetry. That mocking reply of hers on the previous night had put her conduct in quite a different light to me.

She was reclining on a soft velvet lounge in the morning-room, a picture of graceful ease. There was no guilty flush on her proud face, no change with the exception of a slight pallor, which added to rather than detracted from her marvellous beauty.

Leaning her head back more easily against the soft cushion she regarded me steadily for a few moments, ere she replied.

"What explanation is needed, my pretty sister? Do you know that I have never seen you look so well in anything as you do in that pale blue robe? and then excitement suits you. You calm, statue-like women always look well when roused."

This was all uttered in a languid tone, as she reclined there, with a soft smile hovering round the scarlet mouth, one delicate, jewelled hand toyed carelessly with the fringe of the cushion on which her dark head rested.

She looked so cool, so carelessly indifferent, that for a moment my heart and pulses stood still, and I felt that I could kill her as she lay there, in her nonchalant beauty, with that smile upon her face.

"Persis!" I cried, passionately, "Is your heart made of stone that you can lie there, with a smile on your face, knowing that you have ruined my life?"

"Ruined your life!" she echoed, lifting her eyebrows and altering her position, so that she could lean her head upon her hand. "I fail to see it."

"And not only mine, but that of one of the truest and best men it will ever be your lot to know," I went on; "for if ever woman broke a man's heart you have broken Frank's."

"Broken Frank's heart! How?"

Ah, now she was moved. A startled look came over the smiling face, and she rose to a sitting position, putting out her hands to me, as though in supplication.

"How have I broken Frank's heart?" she repeated. There was no carelessness in those piteous, quivering tones. I felt rejoiced for a moment, and then my better nature asserted itself. She, too, suffered from her folly. She was greatly in fault, but she had her punishment; and so my reply was spoken in a gentler tone.

"Do you not know that we saw you and Denzil in the lime avenue last evening?"

"Saw me and Denzil!"

"Yes, I wish you would not keep repeating my words. We saw you both sitting on the seat there, saw him draw you to him!"

"Hush, you are sure it was I?"

There was a fixed look of determination on her pale face, as she rose and stood before me, proud, erect.

"I could, we could scarcely both be mis-

taken," I faltered, my conviction a little shaken by her manner.

"My dear suspicious old sister, you were both mistaken," and, as she stooped and kissed me, that enchanting smile broke over her lovely countenance, chasing away the hard look from the mouth, the shadow from the dusky eyes.

"But," I urged, "your dress, Frank and I—"

"Nay, dear, I swear that I never went near the lime avenue with Denzil," she said, earnestly.

"You left the ball-room together."

"And he went to the smoking-room, I on the terrace to look at the moon."

It was hard to disbelieve the evidence of my own senses, harder still to doubt my sister's honesty. Yet, when I left her some few minutes later, as I beheld Frank's well-known figure coming along the pathway, I felt a strange misgiving at my heart.

There was something more here than could be seen on the surface, and I could not read between the lines.

There are wheels within wheels, and I felt that some unseen wheel was turning the course of our lives in a drear, miserable direction.

Frank's young face wore such a grave, sad expression when I met him in the hall. He greeted me with a smile though, and held out his hand, but he did not speak.

"You will find Persis alone in the morning-room," I said, laying my hand on his arm. "She has explained our absurd mistake, Frank."

A pleased smile flashed all over his face at my words, and it lingered there even when he opened the door of the room where my sister awaited his coming.

I had not seen Denzil yet. He was staying with us, but I had asked to have my chocolate in my own room; so it was with a mingled feeling of pleasure and pain that I met him when I joined those assembled in the library.

"Will you come for a stroll with me, Gundred?" said Denzil, putting his hand on my shoulder and gazing into my upraised eyes with an earnest, intent gaze.

"Yes, Denzil, with pleasure. I wish to speak to you particularly," I replied, and in a few moments we started.

"Now, what is it you have to say to me?"

Denzil paused beside a tall rose-bush, on which some bright raindrops glistened like tiny jewels, for we had had a slight shower in the early morning, and waited with that quiet, grave manner I knew so well for my answer.

"Yes, Denzil, with pleasure. I wish to speak to you particularly," I replied, and in a few moments we started.

"Did she tell you that herself, with her own lips?" and as he put the question my lover's face grew sterner.

"She did, Denzil, but why do you ask?" I replied, a vague pain stealing into my heart.

"Oh, I do not know," he said, putting his hand, with that sudden, quick movement I had often noticed of late, to his left side.

"Are you vexed with me, Denzil?" I asked, wistfully raising my face to his.

There was no one to see that mute appeal for the kiss he had not given me, and I was in the wrong. The longing for peace between us was so great I felt as though my heart would burst, and still he stood there with that grave look on his loved face, over which had crept a grey pallor stealing all the life from it. Oh, would he never forgive my unjust suspicions?

He held out his arm as though with the intention of leading me back to the house, saying as he did so,—

"I am glad you and your sister have come to an understanding. It is not a pleasant sight to see sisters quarrel."

"Denzil, my love!" I cried out in despair, all my natural timidity and reserve vanishing at the dread thought of losing him. "Will you not forgive me?" and stooping forward, he had sunk down on a seat near the rose-bush, I pressed my lips to his in a soft sweet kiss.

That kiss seemed to rouse all the old love,

for his face flushed, his eyes brightened, and I felt his heart beat in quick heavy throbs against my own as he caught me to him with passionate exclamation.

And so we were once more reconciled, but I noticed that Denzil appeared ill at ease all that day, and Persis was not at all herself. Those wild, almost boisterous spirits did not deceive me if they did others. There was something amiss in my pretty innocent sister's life, but what I could not guess. Would Heaven I had been given the power.

A dark, clear, moonless night, the stars shining in their usual brilliancy up in the sky, but lending no light to the calm, slumbering earth. No sound save the occasional chirp, chirp of some grass insect, and the gentle lap, lap of the dark broad river against the grassy sloping banks.

Yes, there was another sound, the swift rush of the night wind through the tall pines and ancient funereal firs and elms, sweeping first with a cold, quick current over me, then dying away in a soft murmur, somewhere among the fluttering leaves. I could feel the gentle caress of the willows as they bent and rustled and whispered to the rippling river, touching my head ever so softly now and again as I walked along filled with sad forebodings.

I had come out here to meet Denzil, who had gone over to Caen Wood Towers, and it was long past the time he had told me to expect him at, but I still lingered, hoping that he would come. Presently my steps led me across the bridge that spanned the river, and I found myself on the verge of the whispering pine wood, and paused a moment to listen to the sound I loved so well, the wind sweeping in strong soft gusts, like an Aeolian harp, through the long branches of the tall trees, between whose branches, too, I could see the stars gleaming in their far-off home.

As I stood there, a dark figure against still darker surroundings, I heard voices some distance off, and fancying it was Denzil returning with a friend I hurried forward, but I came to a standstill before I had gone a hundred yards into the dusky tree shadowed wood, for it was a woman's voice, full-toned and clear, that of my sister Persis, whom I had supposed lying down in her own room, that was borne to me on the fresh night gale—and her companion was Denzil! I saw his face blanched to deathly grey pallor, and heard his voice changed almost beyond recognition, but my lover's voice beyond all denial.

"Persis, in pity hear my prayer. It is not for myself alone that I ask you to do this, but if it goes on it will ruin more lives than one; if it ends now, only one will suffer."

They could not see me as I pressed forward. I wore a dark green velvet robe, and the thick trunks of the trees screened me from their view, and the soft moss did not betray my footsteps. Perhaps it was the act of a mean mind to play eavesdropper, but my excuse lay in the fact that I had been deceived more than once. I would not give them the chance of doing again.

What could Denzil mean by those words spoken in that low, concentrated, passionate voice? They could have but one interpretation. He was pleading for her love, and she, what would her answer be, I wondered? Then her voice fell slowly on the silence that had succeeded his prayer, during which I could hear my own heart beating so loudly that I had drawn back in fear that they would hear it.

"How can I grant your request? I love him so, Denzil. I love him so. How can I? Oh, how can I?"

She threw her hands out, then covered her face and sobbed—oh, so bitterly. Strange words those. What did they mean? They did not sound like the reply to a lover's proposal, and yet what construction could I put upon their actions?

"You must see that it cannot go on like this. There must come an end sooner or later," replied Denzil, and now his voice sounded cold and harsh.

"Let me know some joy. Pity me, Denzil. I would do much for your sake, but leave me in peace a little longer, and then I will give him up."

Her voice was low and sad, and I saw the beautiful proud head droop wearily towards him.

"Persis, you will do this. I have your promise," he exclaimed, eagerly, as he put his arm round her.

"I promise," she whispered.

In my utter misery I forgot where I was, forgot that I was an eavesdropper, everything, save that those two who should have been my dearest friends stood before me convicted of the foulest deceit and falsehood, and in my excitement I stooped forward.

My feet coming in contact with a bush of laurel recalled my wandering senses, and, turning, I ran with the fleetness of a hunted hare back to the house, nor paused until I reached my own apartment, where, after locking the door, I sank down on a lounge in a paroxysm of wild, tearless agony.

Then after a time I grew calmer, and, sitting up, I endeavoured to think out this strange mystery. Why should Persis give up her lover at Denzil's request if she had no love to give him?

I sat there with my hands pressed tightly to my throbbing temples, a strange, numbed, faint feeling stealing over me, trying to collect my thoughts, that would wander away to the first evening of my lover's return, when all earth seemed so bright; then to the night of the ball, and so to this most miserable evening, and there I came to a standstill.

Try as I would I could not solve the mystery; and so, with a deep sigh, I rose, and ringing the bell told my maid to excuse me to mamma and our guests, as I was very tired after my walk.

I had fully made up my mind to one thing, that to-morrow should end all, that the engagement between me and Denzil must be broken off. This determination was arrived at when my pride began to assert itself; and so on the following morning I sought an interview with the man I had thought pure and noble above all men.

Never shall I forget my feelings as I stood beside the still, clear lake, looking away over the far green hills, struggling for strength to speak my words proudly, yet quietly.

The lilies, with their golden and white cups, swayed gently among their dark leaves as a cool, fresh breeze swept across from the hills, and sent the water in a thousand ripples up over the fern strewn, grassy banks. There was a calmness in the air; a peaceful, never-to-be-forgotten day it was, with the soft peacefulness of twittering birds and drowsy humming insects, the gentle whisper of bending, graceful, quivering reeds and weeping willows.

A faint, misty haze rested over the distant hills, and the sweet, low sound of church bells was wafted to us as we stood there facing each other, alone with our own thoughts and sorrows.

I loved him even now. Such love as I had given him could not be quelled in a moment; though the deep respect, the veneration, I might say, were gone, the love still remained, and I could have cried aloud to die ere I spoke the words that meant something worse than death to me.

I broke the silence at last, suddenly, abruptly; if I had stayed to choose my words I think I should have fainted.

"Denzil, this must come to an end," I cried.

He had put his arm round me, and drawn my head down on to his breast, and the touch thrilled me as no other touch ever had or ever would again; but this very weakness gave me strength (so contradictory is human nature) to speak those words; and so, drawing myself away from his embrace, I spoke them hurriedly, but distinctly.

He grew very pale at my words, and put his hand to his heart, a habit of his when agitated, had noticed of late.

"What must come to an end?" he asked staring at me with pain-widened eyes.

"This nonsense, Denzil. You cannot possibly wish our engagement to continue, seeing that you love my sister," I replied, almost jestingly.

I felt quite hysterical, and could have laughed aloud. Now that the ice was broken, a wild, passionate longing came over me to appear calm and cold.

"Gundred, what has made you so in different, so suspicious?" he cried. "Why have you altered so lately?"

"Why have I altered?" I repeated. "It is you who are changed. I—Heaven help me!—I love you still."

And then I paused; in my bitter pain and sorrow I had forgotten my woman's pride, and in my mortification a great calmness came to me, and when he spoke I even smiled, coldly and restrainedly, but still I smiled.

"Then, if you love me, why break our engagement? Nay, not a word of Persis; that is a paltry excuse."

"Did I say I loved you still? That was a mistake. I meant the remembrance of what has been still has power to move me. But I think it is scarcely proper to allow things to go on as they now stand," I said coldly, regarding him with an icy, fixed expression, though the blood was coursing madly through my veins, and my heart throbbed almost to suffocation.

"Gundred, you speak in riddles; cannot you be straightforward for once; but, there, I suppose it is asking an impossibility of a woman!" he cried, taking my cold hand in his, and gazing into my face with the old gaze; but now his eyes were dim with pain, and that grey pallor had overspread his working features.

"I saw you and Persis in the wood last evening, and heard part of your conversation, quite enough to show me how deeply deceit is rooted in man's nature. Could you not have come to me and honestly said, 'My love has flown from you, it is your sister whom I wish to marry?' I would gladly have released you from an irksome bondage; but no, it caused you less annoyance and trouble to make love to us both; and again, I daresay, it tickled your manly vanity to hear me tell my love."

"Hush!"
Denzil had stood with folded arms and down-bent head while I poured forth this torrent of words in calm, even tones. His face had become very quiet, and only by the twitching of the firm mouth beneath the silken moustache could I see how he was moved.

But I went on pitilessly, still in that calm measured voice that even to my own ears sounded cruel; but he had shown no pity to me, why should I spare him? So heedless not that word in which I felt there breathed a world of agony I continued.

"And so when I come to you and ask why you have behaved so, you would even then try to cozen me into the belief that I am mistaken. You men cannot forego one little of what you consider your rights—the right to make woman's heart a toy to amuse you when other pleasures cloy—noble pastime, truly!"

"Gundred, Gundred, hear me!" he cried, taking step forward, and raising his right hand to the blue-grey sky above our heads, from which the sun shone down in pale-straggling beams. A stray shaft fell athwart his face as he lifted his eyes, so dark with bitter sorrow; and looking at him standing there, so noble-looking, so full of grand proud manhood, I wondered how such things could be, how one to all outward seeming so pure, so true, could be so base at heart.

"I am listening," I returned, quietly.

"Gundred, I swear by the love I bear you—oh, darling! do not smile so scornfully—that I have never spoken one word of love to Persis. Ask her. There she comes, ask her! She must in justice explain!"

He spoke with feverish haste, and hurried forward, and, turning, I saw Persis coming slowly towards us, a bright smile playing

round her full red lips, and dancing in her great black eyes.

"In mercy's name, Persis, explain to Gundred that our meeting in the wood yesterday was a mere accident, and not the assignation of lovers," I heard him say, and then I joined them.

"What is it you wish me to say?" she asked, languidly, letting her long dark lashes rest on her crimsoning cheeks.

My lover glanced surprisedly at her, as he answered impatiently,—

"Do not trifile, Persis. Did I ask you to meet me in the wood yesterday for the purpose of declaring my love to you? Did I speak one word of love?"

"Then why seek a secret meeting?" I interrupted.

"Gundred, I did not intend to meet your sister until I dis—" he paused here, and I waited for my sister's reply.

Persis turned her dusky eyes slowly on me, and then a look of intelligence. I cannot quite explain the look flashed into them. She was so really beautiful, so different to any woman I had ever seen before that even I, a woman, was fascinated by her loveliness. Could I blame Denzil?

"You do not wish me to repeat all our conversation, surely," she said, lifting her white lids, then drooping them again, with a faint shyness in her manner.

I felt the meaning in her words, and glanced straight at Denzil, who clutched at a waving branch of the willow, opened his lips as if about to speak, then closed them again, staring the while at my sister, with a look almost of horror in his dark eyes.

"Persis has given you an answer," I said, coldly.

"Well, he did not ask me to come to the wood with the express determination of making love to me; of that I am assured," replied Persis, with a rippling merry laugh.

"You have told me all I wish to hear," I returned. "This is the end of all," and, as I spoke, I slipped my engagement ring off my finger and placed it in Denzil's hand, and turned away, leaving all that is brightest and best on earth behind me—youth, love, and happiness. The future lay before me—a wild, drear, barren waste, the cold waste of a loveless, disappointed, spoiled life.

((To be concluded in our next.)

THE world deals good-naturedly with good-natured people; and I never knew a sulky misanthropist who quarrelled with it, but it was he, and not it, that was in the wrong.

WHAT IS TINWARE?—Many people still think tinware is pure tin, and astonishment is often depicted on the countenances of the unsophisticated, when told that only from two to six parts in a hundred of a piece of tin-plate is pure tin, the rest being sheet iron or steel, and the tin only a thin coating. The process of coating iron plates with tin was first invented in Bohemia, or Silesia, in the fore part of the seventeenth century; but, like everything else in those times, the process was very crude. The iron plates at that time were produced by hammering, and of course varied much in thickness, and seldom exceeded six or eight inches in width and length; these plates were heated, dipped in water, mixed with wood-ash, then polished by scrubbing them by hand with sand, covered with a greasy substance and dipped into molten tin. On account of the uneven surface of the iron plates, a heavy coating of tin—from fifteen to twenty pounds per hundred pounds of iron—was necessary to produce a bright appearance. The plates that were made in those times were very costly, and were mostly worked into cuirasses for warriors, ornaments for church steeples, and occasionally into vessels for family use; but the latter were so expensive that a piece would be kept as a valuable inheritance by several generations.

FACETIE.

UNPREDICING Old Bachelor:—"And why do you think I ought to get married, Miss Mabel?" Miss Mabel (aged twelve):—"Oh, you look as if you needed somebody to take care of you and—Oh, goodness, you didn't think I said that to lead you on, did you?"

"WHAT ails your arm?" said Major Soloth to Captain McSwisp, yesterday. "I was shot with a toy pistol." "What! and live to tell the sad tale? Great goodness, man, how did you escape instant death?" "The boy who fired the thing was cross-eyed."

"Yes," said the young clergyman, "I have always said to myself I would marry that girl if I could, and now I am going to do it. But it is to another fellow she is to be wedded, I am sorry to say. The only consolation I got out of the affair will be the fee."

A YOUNG man who had been going with a girl for some time, and had made her several presents, asked her one day if she would accept a puppy. He was awfully wild when she replied that her mother had told her, if he proposed to her, to say no.

Two ladies belonging to the upper-ten division of Austin Society met one day. Said one:—"Have you heard that Mrs. B. died last night?" "No, bless me! Is that so? That's too bad. Why, she owed me a visit!" exclaimed the other.

"Why is your teacher so severe with you? She seems a pleasant sort of maiden lady," observed a mother to her complaining little daughter just from school. "I don't know, mamma," was the reply; "but she doesn't seem to remember so far back as when she was a child."

A COUNTRY gentleman made a rockery in front of his house, in which he planted some rare and beautiful ferns, and, having put up the following notice, found it more efficient and less expensive than spring guns or man-traps. The fear-inspiring inscription was: "Beggars beware—Scolopendriums and Polypodiums are set here!"

Some of his neighbours thought the editor was ostentatious when he had his occupation as well as his name engraved on his door-plate. But they were mistaken. It was simply done as a protection against burglars. The editor well knew that no burglar, if he understood his business, would waste his time going through a house occupied by a newspaper man.

A CREDULOUS countryman went to the clergyman of his parish, and told him, with great symptoms of consternation, that he had seen a ghost. "Where did you see it?" was the question. "Why," said Diggory, "as I was going along, sir, by the church, right up against the wall, I sees the ghost." "In what shape did it appear?" "For all the world like a great donkey." "Go home, and hold your tongue," said the clergyman, "for you are a timid creature, and have been only frightened by your own shadow."

SHE OBLIGED HIM.—Edwin Booth was once playing Petruchio with an actress who was considerably larger than himself, and he thought she let go the whip too readily when, as Petruchio, he wrested it from the hand of Katharine. So, after the play was over, he said, "You must hold on to the whip with more firmness to-morrow night. Grasp it as hard as you can; I'll get it away from you, never fear." The next performance of Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew* came, and the melancholy-eyed tragedian, who, for the nonce, was essaying comedy, attempted to take the instrument of flagellation from his female "support." It was no use. She held on to it with a grasp of iron, and the audience soon began to see the joke, and applauded the actress to the echo. Finally, out of pure good-nature, she unloosed her hold, and the play proceeded. When the curtain fell, the actor had no further advice to give,

A SNEAK THIEF caught in a dwelling escaped by saying that he was a physician who had been called to the house. The people were dreadfully frightened. When they took him for a thief they feared for their valuables; but when he said he was a physician they trembled for their lives.

FRIENDLY FEMININE COUNSEL.—Madame Ernst quotes this charming mot which Gautier once addressed to her: "When you wish to appear beautiful and attractive, consult your best lady friend, show her all your dresses, ask her to select the one you should wear, and then choose another."

AN eccentric old gentleman placed in a field on his estate a board with the following generous offer painted thereon: "I will give this to any one who is contented." It was not long before he had an applicant, "Well, my man, are you a contented fellow?" "Yes, sir—very." "Then why do you want my field?" The applicant did not wait to reply.

AN elegantly-dressed young lady recently entered a railway-carriage in Paris where there were three or four gentlemen, one of whom was lighting a cigar. Observing her, with the characteristic politeness of a Frenchman, he asked her if smoking would inconvenience her. She replied, "I do not know, sir. No gentleman has ever smoked in my presence."

A YOUNG tenor obtained a hearing before a director of one of the provincial theatres. He sang, but the manager stopped him at the end of three or four notes. "Very well," he said, "leave me your address, and I will think of you if it should happen—" "What do you mean by 'if it should happen'?" interrupted the young tenor. "Why, if my theatre should burn—" "Well?" "I should engage you to cry 'Fire,'"

A FALL OUT.—A teacher asked a bright little girl the other day what country was opposite to us on the globe. "I don't know, sir," was the reply. "Well, now," pursued the teacher, "if I were to bore a hole through the earth, and you were to go in at this end, where would you come out?" "Out of the hole, sir," said the pupil, in triumph.

BALI.—In a recent speech at Calcutta, Professor Monier Williams pointed out that some of the inscriptions at the exhibition there were liable to be misunderstood, as, for instance, that under an image of Bali. This god is accounted the prince of darkness, the despot of the infernal regions; and the Indian cataloguer has labelled him "The King of the Netherlands."

COMMON LAW AND EQUITY.—"Pray, my lord," said a gentleman of a late respected and rather whimsical judge, "what is the difference between Common Law and Equity Courts?" "Very little in the end," replied his lordship; "they only differ so far as time is concerned. At Common Law you are done for at once—in Equity you are not so easily disposed of. The former is a bullet, which is instantaneously and most charmingly effective. The latter is an angler's hook, which plays with its victim before it kills it. The one is prussic acid—the other laudanum."

SOME funny stories are told about a leader in society here who prides herself on her affability, and it's about as agreeable as chalk-and-water is for milk. Sailing—she never seems to walk like any other human being—through a crowded *salon*, she met a lady whom she saluted with the much talked-of affability. She inquired after her health, and then said, with much interest, "How is your husband?" The inquiry was met with the response that he had been dead for two years. Then there was any amount of condolence expressed and *au revoir* said. About half-an-hour later they met again in the supper-room; to the surprise of every one the same questions were asked, when the inquiry "How is your husband?" came, the little lady, equal to the emergency, quietly answered, "Still dead!" and walked away, leaving the would-be leader in society to reflect on the advantages of a good memory.

"AIN'T you ashamed of yourself to fight with a boy so much smaller than yourself? I really can't understand it," said a clerical looking gentleman to a big boy who was imposing on a small one. "So you can't understand it?" retorted the young ruffian, impudently. "No, I can't." "Well, then, why do you meddle with things you don't understand?"

"I CAN'T carry this bundle," said a wife to her husband. "I can't," the husband replied, "for I have to carry two children." "But you ought to have some consideration for me," the wife continued; "you must think I am a waggon." "Oh, no, my dear, I don't think you are a waggon. A waggon holds its tongue."

"I HAD hardly entered the room," said he, with a tremulous voice, "when a mist suddenly gathered before my eyes. I was unable to see an inch in front of me. I heard the murmur of voices, and then—" "You fainted!" quickly put in his friend. "No; I wiped the frost off my glasses."

MIKE:—"It's the Irish that does all the inventing in these days, sure." Jonathan:—"Irish be hanged! The Irish don't invent anything to speak of. Americans invent everything." Mike:—"Thin, perhaps, yes can tell me why the Irishman's name, Pat, is always next to the date on all new inventions. Not an American name can you find on one at all, at all."

Two students who were not rolling in wealth used to go each morning in turn to buy provisions for the day. One day he whose turn it was to make the purchase had scarcely put two cutlets upon the table before the cat grabbed one and ran away with it. "Ah!" said he to his friend, "the cat has run away with your cutlet!"

A DOUBLE FARE.—A gentleman resident in Edinburgh, whose personal dimensions were somewhat similar to those of Falstaff, was in the habit, when travelling by coach, to secure half the *inside* of the vehicle for himself. Having a new servant, he sent him one day to book him for a neighbouring town. The man returned with the following pleasing intelligence: "There weren't two places inside left, sir, so I took one in and another out!"

AN ENGLISH gentleman, being at a brilliant assembly of the *elite* of Vienna recently, was much annoyed at the conduct of a distinguished lady of that city, who amused herself and a small circle of friends by saying smart, but generally uncourteous, things to him and others. "By-the-way," added she, "how is that your countrywomen speak French so very imperfectly? We Austrians use it with the same freedom as if it were our own native tongue." "Madam," retorted he, but with the blandest manner possible, "I know not, unless it be that the French army have not been twice to our capital to teach it as they other at yours."

RETURNED, WITH THANKS.—A literary man, possessor of the learned degree of doctor, used to take his mid-day refraction at a well-known *cafe* in the French capital. One wet day the place was less fully attended than usual, and the miserable state of the weather induced most of the visitors to seek their various employments as speedily as possible. When proceeding to follow their example, the learned doctor was astonished to find, in place of his shabby and weather-beaten head covering, a new hat, shining with sparkling brilliancy. He could only attribute this quimical change to the delicate attention of some friend, and hastened to display the acquisition, with no little pride, to his family. The next day a young man accosted him at the *cafe*, and politely said:—"Doctor, allow me to claim my hat and apologize for the apparent mistake. The fact was, however, I had no umbrellas, and you had one. I did not know what to do to prevent my new hat from being spoilt in the rain, and as I knew yours could not be made worse than it is, I borrowed it, and now return it with thanks."

SOCIETY.

The children of the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh have arrived at Deeside, and will stay during the summer months at Abergeldy Mysa. It is understood that the Duke and Duchess will reside during the shooting season at Brkball.

It is announced that one of the first acts of the Prince of Wales after the resumption of his public duties, which have been interrupted by the death of his brother, will be the opening of the City of London Technical College at South Kensington.

The marriage of Lieutenant-Colonel Arthur Campbell Walker, of Her Majesty's Body Guard, with Mrs. Mowbray, took place on the 5th inst. at Hove Church, Brighton. The wedding breakfast was given at the residence of Viscount and Viscountess Ashbrooke, the latter being the sister of the bride.

A MARRIAGE will shortly take place between Mr. Edmund Maxwell Stuart, son of the Hon. Henry Maxwell Stuart, of Traquair, and the Hon. Mary Anne Countess Maxwell, youngest daughter of the late Lord Harries.

The two sons of the King of Greece are leaving home for a long stay. The younger, Prince George, will be entered as a cadet in the naval service of Denmark; the elder son, the Crown Prince, will become a student in law, science and politics at the Berlin University.

The Maori King Tawhiao is one of the lesser lions of the Loudon season. He and his suite have attracted considerable attention during their peregrinations through the metropolis. The King and his suite are beautifully tattooed in the most approved style.

The home-coming of the elder daughter of Mr. Crawshay Bailey, with her husband, Mr. Gordon Canning, from their wedding tour was made the occasion of great rejoicings at Aberavon, and in the surrounding neighbourhood. The train bearing the newly-married couple was eagerly awaited by literally thousands of friends, and on alighting, Mr. and Mrs. Canning had quite a royal reception.

The entire town was profusely decorated, and the utmost enthusiasm, thoroughly accounted for by the immense popularity of so prominent a man as Mr. Crawshay Bailey, prevailed. The festivities at Maindife Court were continued during the remainder of the day, and terminated with a great display of fireworks.

It is stated that the Princess Louise is to execute the statue of the Queen, which is the only thing remaining to be placed in the west front of Lichfield Cathedral, to complete the restorations so ably carried out by the dean.

A very elegant costume was worn recently by a young widow on the occasion of her second marriage. It was composed of silver-grey, shot with white corded silk, train, and bodice, over a shot pink and grey satin broché petticoat; the pattern on the front breadth, in water-lilies and grass, was outlined in opal beads, which had a charming effect; over a wreath of real water-lilies and grass was thrown in graceful folds a plain tulie veil. As the hair is now worn so high, it is somewhat difficult to arrange the orthodox wreath of orange blossom, which is often dispensed with, the veil being fastened with pearl or diamond stars, or, when jewels are not available, with flaggee silver arrows, butterflies, or stars.

At this season bridesmaids' dresses are more often than not made of cream, ivory, or pearl-white, with natural flowers of brilliant hues. A very pretty effect may be produced where there are twelve bridesmaids by having all the dresses of cream-coloured Indian silk, muslin, and lace; but six of the wearers should have flowers of the field and hedgerow, and the other six garden and cultivated flowers. The wild-flower maidens should wear fancy straw hats, trimmed with bouquets; their companion six, small lace bonnets, covered with flowers.

STATISTICS.

THE WORLD'S WATERS.—A work by Dr. Otto Krummel, of Gottingen, gives the following calculations of the extent of the different seas of the globe : Atlantic Ocean, 49,420,468 square miles; Pacific Ocean, 99,797,917 square miles; Indian Ocean, 45,462,040 square miles; Arctic Ocean, 9,481,291 square miles, of which an area of 663,249 square miles is covered by Hudson's Bay, and 7,715 square miles by the White Sea; Antarctic Ocean, 12,696,236 square miles. The Australian Sea covers 5,112,491 square miles; Mediterranean, 1,780,029 square miles; Red Sea, 278,944 square miles; Persian Gulf, 146,847 square miles. Of those bodies of water which may be termed coast seas, the North Sea has a superficial extent of 330,526 square miles; the Irish Sea, 126,200 square miles; Japan Sea, 647,170 square miles; Okhotak Sea, 934,717 square miles; Behring Sea, 1,440,388 square miles; Sea of California, 103,678 square miles. Dr. Krummel estimates that the total sea area is 231,915,905 square miles, while the total area of the continents and islands of the globe is only 34,354,750 square miles. It will be seen that the three great oceans have more than five-sixths of the total sea area, their combined extent being 194,780,425 square miles.

GEMS.

GRATITUDE is a duty none can be excused from, because it is always at our own disposal.

COURAGE is evidenced in words as much as in deeds, and in acts of omission not less than in those of commission.

EXCESS of ceremony was always the companion of weak minds; it is a plant that will never grow in a strong soil.

To be in company with those we love satisfies us; it does not signify whether we speak to them or not, whether we think of them or of indifferent things; to be near them is all.

An Oriental potentate once bade his prime minister compose for him a motto that would answer both for seasons of prosperity and adversity. Here is the sentence which he had engraved upon his signet-ring: "This too shall soon pass away."

Love is indeed a transcendent excellence, an essential and sovereign good; it maketh the heavy burden light, and the rugged path smooth; it beareth all things without feeling their weight, and from every adversity taketh away the sting.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

FOUND SEED-CAKE.—One pound of butter beaten to a cream, one pound of sifted lump-sugar, one pound of flower well dried, eight eggs, yolks and whites beaten separately, and caraway seeds to taste. Mix the ingredients, and beat all well together for an hour. Put the batter into a tin shape, lined with paper and buttered. Bake in a moderate oven.

RHUBARB JAM—Wash the rhubarb, and rub with a dry cloth (don't pare it), cut it into squares, put it into a jar in the proportion of one pound of loaf-sugar to one and one-fourth pounds of rhubarb, take some of the sugar, and with it rub off the rind of one lemon to three pounds of rhubarb; strain the juice into the jar where you have the rhubarb and sugar, cut up the lemon into small dice, mix all together, and let them remain covered for twenty-four hours, or until the whole of the sugar is melted. Drain the juice from the rhubarb, and boil it for twenty minutes, then add the rhubarb, and boil thirty minutes, leaving the squares in shape. Great care must be taken in stirring it, or the squares will break. This jazz is exceedingly good and keeps well.

MISCELLANEOUS.

JAPANESE ART IN LONDON.—A company has been formed in London for the purpose of introducing a grand Japanese art and industrial exhibition, to take the form of a village peopled by native men, women, and children, and designed to illustrate, in a unique and comprehensive manner, the industrial, social and domestic life of Japan. Arrangements have been made to import from Japan a number of Japanese of various trades and professions, decorations, illuminations, music, instruments, books, scenery, rare manufactured goods of every description, and articles of *veru*, and to arrange the whole in such a way as to constitute a high-class and unparalleled exhibition of all the trades, arts, industries, sciences, artistic and economic productions, habits and customs of a peculiar and ingenious people. The exhibition will be made up of streets, shops of every kind, manufactories with skilled native artizans engaged in their different crafts, as, for instance, pottery, metal working, paper making, manufacture of textile fabrics, embroidery, silk weaving, bronze casting, lacquering, decorating, engraving, carpentry, &c.; also of private dwellings, schools, scientific entertainments, native horses and domestic animals, national pastimes, illustrations of the national carnivals and legends, photography, confectionery, refreshments, buffets, tea factory, together with Japanese goods, to be exhibited and for sale.

ECCENTRIC BIBLES.—Although everybody knows that there are in existence certain editions of Bibles, which are much prized by bibliomaniacs on account of some ridiculous printer's blunder, few people perhaps are aware how many of these editions there are. The most widely known are the Breeches and the Vinegar Bibles. The former is so called because, in the Geneva version of Genesis iii. 7, Adam and Eve are spoken of as making themselves breeches out of fig leaves. This translation of the Scriptures, which was done by the English exiles at Geneva, served as the regular family Bible in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, until it was superseded by the authorised version of James I. The Vinegar Bible was so named from the headline of the 20th chapter of St. Luke, which reads as "The Parable of the Vinegar," instead of "The Vineyard." The date of this was 1717. In addition, however, to these well-known examples, there are others quite as singular. The Place-makers' Bible obtained its name from a typographical error, which occurs in Matthew v. 9, viz., "Blessed are the place-makers," instead of "peace-makers." The politicians of the present day would probably not have objected to the use of the former benediction. The Treacle Bible, printed 1568, had a passage in Jeremiah viii. 22, which read "Is there no treacle in Gilead," instead of "Is there no balm?" The He and She Bible was so called from a very slight mistake that occurred in Ruth iii. 15, when, instead of "she went into the city," it was printed "he went." The Wicked Bible, printed 1631, was rather an expensive one to the printer, who was fined £300 because, from malice or carelessness, the negative was left out of the seventh commandment (Exodus xx. 14). The Murderer's Bible was a mistake of the present century, and was so called from an error in the 16th verse of the Epistle of Jude, making it to read, "There are murderers, complainers," instead of "murmurers." The Printer's Bible, issued in 1702, contained an absurd misstatement of David in the 119th Psalm, v. 181, in which he was pathetically made to say that "printers persecuted him without a cause," instead of "princes." There would have been a degree of probability about this in these days of royal anthonship, which would have made such a mistake highly amusing.—G. P. B.—(Queen.)

AFFECTATION is a certain deformity; by forming themselves on fantastic models the young begin with being ridiculous, and often end in being vicious.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

LUCAS.—A special marriage licence costs about £30.

C. V.—The present population of London is estimated to be something over four millions; that of New York is about a million and five hundred thousand.

GIRL WIFE.—A marriage in a registrar's office is perfectly legal. The late Lord Palmerston, Prime Minister of England, was so married.

H. X. M.—We decline to assist you to be married "on the quiet" in the sense you evidently infer. Clandestine marriages seldom lead to happiness.

ANXIOUS INQUIRER.—Write to the office of the company by which you propose to send the things, and they will give you every particular.

W. W.—A little over six miles is the greatest depth yet found in the ocean. In writing for publication, only one side of the sheet should be written on.

T. F. R.—You had better be governed entirely by the advice of your mother in this matter. Your hair is brownish red.

M. N.—We advise you not to do anything until you are sought by the gentleman, and then to be very careful not to appear over anxious for his society.

A. F.—No, brothers and sisters of these ages are often found going together—even to school. Where they are not so related, of course their parents have them in charge, and direct their movements.

P. F.—We do not profess to be an authority as to the etiquette of dancing; but in all the affairs of life of which we have any knowledge it is very essential that a gentleman should always "carry himself straight."

TEN YEARS' SUBSCRIBER.—Tincture of cantharides and sweet oil is a first-rate stimulant for the hair. Any receipt to make it lighter would only injure it; you had better leave it alone.

BELLA.—Get your brother if you have one, or your father or nearest relation to ask him what his intentions are; or if you prefer that course treat him with judicious coldness, and he will soon reveal himself.

FLORIE.—Very pretty if features are good, and there is a pleasant expression. 2. Squeeze them out and bathe with sprits of wine; take plenty of exercise in the fresh air and a little saline medicine.

M. G.—1. The word "negro" is not in the Bible. 2. A man's first wife's children are half brothers and sisters to those of his second wife. 3. You have the word, the preposition, rightly spelled in your sentence.

M. C. P.—You can only learn this trade by working with a practical fitter as an apprentice or learner. There are no schools where it is taught. There should be public schools for all the principal trades.

W. N. D.—Do not permit any familiarity. As you gain experience you will cease to blush so readily. You are both too young to entertain company with a view to marriage.

L. T.—Treat the young gentleman as a friend. You may like him better on a longer acquaintance. You can trust your parents in this matter. Their judgment is better than yours.

K. S.—It would be proper to continue playing until the piece was finished. The hair inclosed is auburn, though commonly called red. You write fairly well, but should strive to improve.

G. B. W.—Let him entirely alone. Possibly, if he finds that you can get along very well without his company, he may be more desirous of winning your favour.

B. S. M.—The best course is to go to see the young lady as quickly as possible, and woo her with all possible earnestness; otherwise she may become reconciled to her beau, and you will lose her.

L. B. G.—You can only wait. You may meet some one whom you will love well enough to marry. If your beau has energy and ability, he may succeed in the Colonies, and return to you. Do not build any hopes, however, upon this.

TON TROUBLE.—She is your first cousin once removed. Neither the law of the land nor of Moses stands in the way of your proposing for this lovely girl, nor if she will have you, and your cousin agrees to give her, of your being married.

K. L.—You and your aunt are two very foolish women. It is very unhealthy to lace so very tight; one does it not only at the expense of health, but also good looks, for the blood rushes to the face and hands, causes pimples, a swollen red nose, and red, drooping eyes.

R. N.—Do not try to attract this young man. Let him see plainly that you are liked by others and can be very happy without any attention from him. Nothing tends to increase the value of anything in our eyes so much as to see it desired by others. This course will be likely to bring about the desired result.

LITTLE B.—1. You are both too young to think of marriage, neither being sufficiently able to cope with the weighty responsibilities of that state in life. I implore you to mind by study for the next five years, and be guided by the advice of your parents. Do not let the foolish and, one might say, suicidal, idea of sleeping with the boy get the better of your good judgment. 2. Your writing shows considerable room for improvement.

3. The so-called French phrase quoted is not translatable. 4. By referring to the back numbers of this volume, you will find what you require. 5. Present the young man with a pair of hand-embroidered slippers, a smoking-cap, or some other article which your good taste may suggest.

V. T.—Do not be discouraged or hasty. Wait until your friend voluntarily calls upon you, and then treat him as kindly and pleasantly as usual. Do not write or manifest your desire for a reconciliation. Wait until you meet again in the natural course of events. You are both too young to marry.

LITTLE LEDA.—We do not know anything about the firm or the remedy which you mention. As a rule, it is not wise for a man to buy medicines which he knows nothing about of strangers as to whose trustworthiness he has no assurance.

ALDA.—You should ascertain directly from your betrothed his intentions. He has no right to act in this dilatory manner, and you have good cause to suspect his sincerity. Unless he really desires to fulfil his promises of marriage at once, we advise you to dismiss him, however it may grieve you to do so.

CONNIE.—We do not think that you have any cause of complaint. Endeavour to be contented, and make yourself as agreeable when you call upon the young lady that she will desire more frequent visits. You are so young that we think that the lady shows a good deal of wisdom in her conduct.

A BIT OF EXPERIENCE.

I have met with a good many people
In jogging o'er life's varied way;
I've encountered the clever, the simple,
The crabbed, the grave and the gay;
I have travelled with beauty, with virtue;
I have been with the ugly, the bad;
I have laughed with the ones who were merry,
And wept with the ones who were sad.

One thing I have learned in my journey—
Never to judge one by what he appears.
The eyes that seem sparkling with laughter
Oft battle to keep back the tears,
And long, sanctimonious faces,
Hide often the souls that are vile,
While the heart that is merry and cheerful
Is often the freest from guile.

And I've learned not to look for perfection
In one of our fr ill human-kind.
In hearts the most gentle and loving,
Some blemish or fault we can find.
But yet I have ne'er found the creature
So low, so depraved, or so mean
But had some good impulse—one virtue
That among his bad traits might be seen.

And, too, I have learned that most friendships
Are made, are as brittle as glass.

Just let a reverse overtake us—
Our "friends" on the "other side" pass.
But, ah! I have found some few loyal—
Some hearts ever loving and true!
And the joy and the peace they have brought me
Have cheered me my whole journey through.

K. C.

L. K.—A young man should not marry until he is of age, and possesses sufficient to maintain a family in comfort. One year does not make any material difference, and it would be better to postpone your marriage until you are twenty-two. It is better for the man to be the elder, but, provided the lady is not more than a year or so older, it does not matter very much.

CARLOTTA.—To make raspberry jam; take an equal weight of the fruit and sugar, and wash the fruit with a wooden or silver spoon. Put it into a preserving-kettle, and let it stew quickly. When most of the juice is drawn out, add the sugar, and let it boil fifteen or twenty minutes. If boiled too long, it becomes hard. When the fruit and sugar are put on the fire together, it makes the preserved jam hard; but when the sugar is added as above, while the jam is well cooked, it is mixed with a clear jelly.

D. Y. T.—1. It is said that by using a mixture made by scraping horse-radish into a cup of cold sour milk, letting it stand for twelve hours, and then straining, freckles may be effectively removed. Apply two or three times a day. 2. The proper form of introduction is to present the gentleman to the lady, the younger to the older, the inferior to the superior. The exact words used in introductions are immaterial, if the proper order is preserved. 3. If the lady is well acquainted with her escort, it would not be improper to invite him into the house after the entertainment, provided the hour is not too late, in which case she should ask him to call again at some future time.

R. D.—A little friendly artifice is frequently employed in cases of this kind. Take some friend of the young lady into your confidence and find out what she would like or what would be serviceable and procure that. Many wedding gifts are valueless for want of this. A nice shawl pin, or a parlour ornament if he is to keep home, or a dressing-table article is nice and fitting. Send your card attached to the article, and if you know the lady fairly write a kind note, telling her that you

will bring her every happiness, and that you hope she will accept something from you of no great value, but that it will recall the affectionate regard of her friend. Much of the charm will depend on the way in which this thing is done.

A. B. D.—We have not heard of any former play named as you describe. The rather irreverent phrase has long been in use in American literature. The quotation you give probably originated from Jonathan M. Sewell, in an Epilogue to *Cato*:

"No pent-up Utica contracts your powers,
But the whole boundless continent is yours."

T. C. D.—The experiment has not been tried on a large enough number to afford exact statistics, but only a small proportion of persons can be thoroughly mesmerised; and there are some to whom the process is dangerous. No one should submit to the attempts of others without the advice and counsel of some one who knows whether it will be safe or not.

MARIA J.—It would not be right, nor would it be discreet, for you to sail under any such false colour. There are, of course, people who know your real age, and if you should attempt to pass for an older person than you really are, you would have to enter upon a life of deception. Remember Sir Walter Scott's warning:

"O, what a tangled web we weave
When first we practice to deceive!"

L. R. T.—You are by no means too old to learn the simple rules of arithmetic. Procure any plain and easy work on that subject, and it will not take you long to master addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. Fraction is what you need. You write a pretty fair hand, and express your ideas clearly, and we see no reason why you should not be able to learn how to make out bills correctly.

L. S.—The only way to overcome your bashfulness is to go up to your friends when you meet them in the street, and speak to them. Do this resolutely and habitually, and the dread of doing it will soon begin to wear off, and will finally disappear. Go in society as much as you can, and talk with the ladies, as well as with the gentlemen. Force yourself to do this, and after a while you will find it comparatively easy to converse with anybody.

M. M. D.—Your formation of letters is remarkably good, but your division of syllables, or where syllables ought to be recognized, shows that your education is only in progress. Push on and get a good general education, which will enable you to select the best place, means and department for further and thorough education. Designing, as for carpets, wall paper, etc., copying, decorating, illustrating, and drawing and painting, are all made remunerative by the owners of ability and trained skill.

J. W. F.—1. The following acrostic may suit your taste:—

"Born beneath a lucky star,
Eminent thy beauties are,
Rising over those around
To a height we rarely see,
Happiness the most profound
All who know thee wish for thee."

2. A young man of nineteen years should be about 5 feet 5 inches high, and weigh between 125 and 130 pounds, this being considered the average.

M. L. J.—1. The young man is rather selfish in monopolizing your time and affection without coming to some definite conclusion as to whether he intends to marry, as he does so, he presents you from accepting advantageous offers. If you love him so dearly, however, use your own discretion about waiting for him to put the question. 2. There is a great deal to praise in your handwriting. 3. The look of hair is a dark-brown. 4. It is not considered polite to write a letter to a friend on a half-sheet of paper. 5. "Love powders," so called, are mixtures compounded by charlatans and quacks, for the benefit of persons who possess a superabundance of verdancy.

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JULY, 1884.

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We are, Sir, faithfully yours, SYMES & Co.

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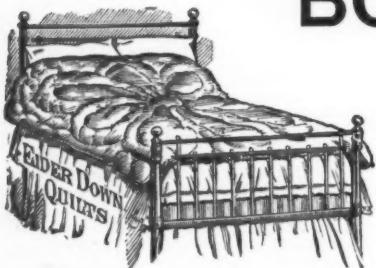
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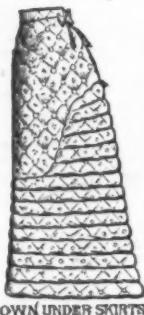
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